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A fashion week is a fashion industry event, lasting approximately one week, where fashion designers, brands or "houses" display their latest collections in runway fashion shows to buyers and the media. These events influence trends for the current and upcoming seasons. The most prominent fashion weeks are held in the fashion capitals of the world; New York, London, Milan, and Paris, or the "Big Four" which receive the majority of press coverage.

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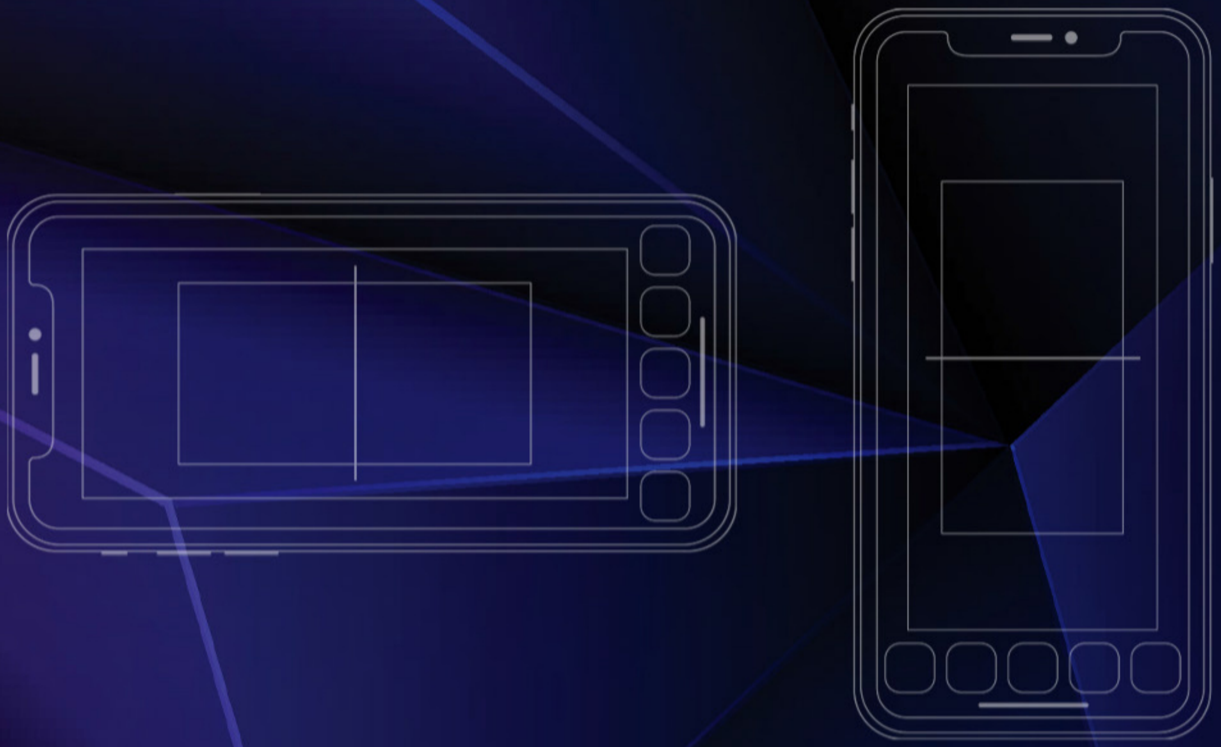

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NVIDIA
2788-2888 SAN TOMAS

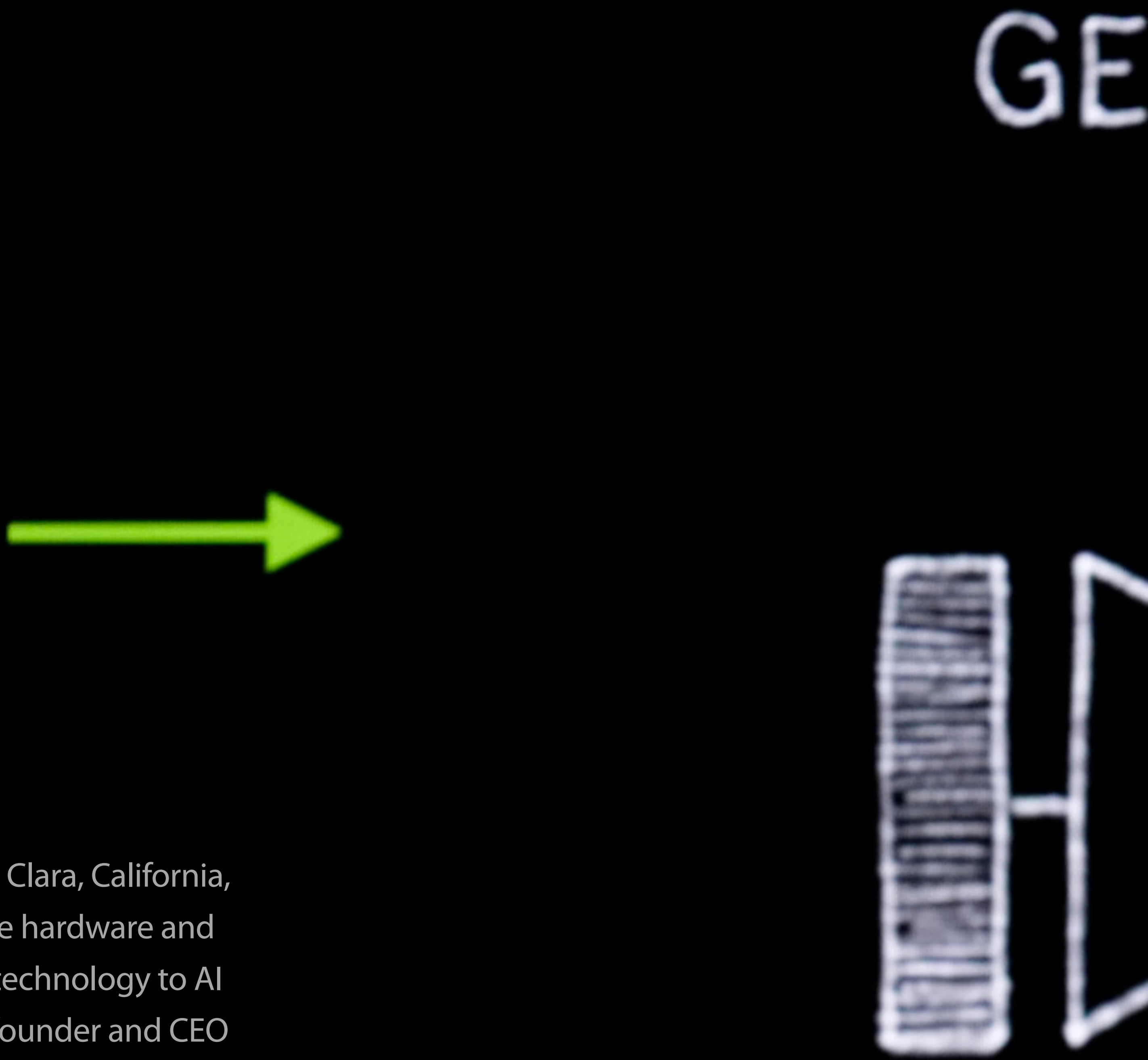
Image: Jeff Chiu

NVIDIA'S PROFIT SOARS, UNDERSCORING ITS DOMINANCE IN CHIPS FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Nvidia on Wednesday overshot Wall Street estimates as its profit skyrocketed, bolstered by the chipmaking dominance that has made the company an icon of the artificial intelligence boom.

Its net income rose more than sevenfold compared to a year earlier, jumping to $14.88 billion in its first quarter that ended April 28 from $2.04 billion a year earlier. Revenue more than tripled, rising to $26.04 billion from $7.19 billion in the previous year.

"The next industrial revolution has begun," CEO Jensen Huang declared on a conference call with analysts. Huang predicted that the companies

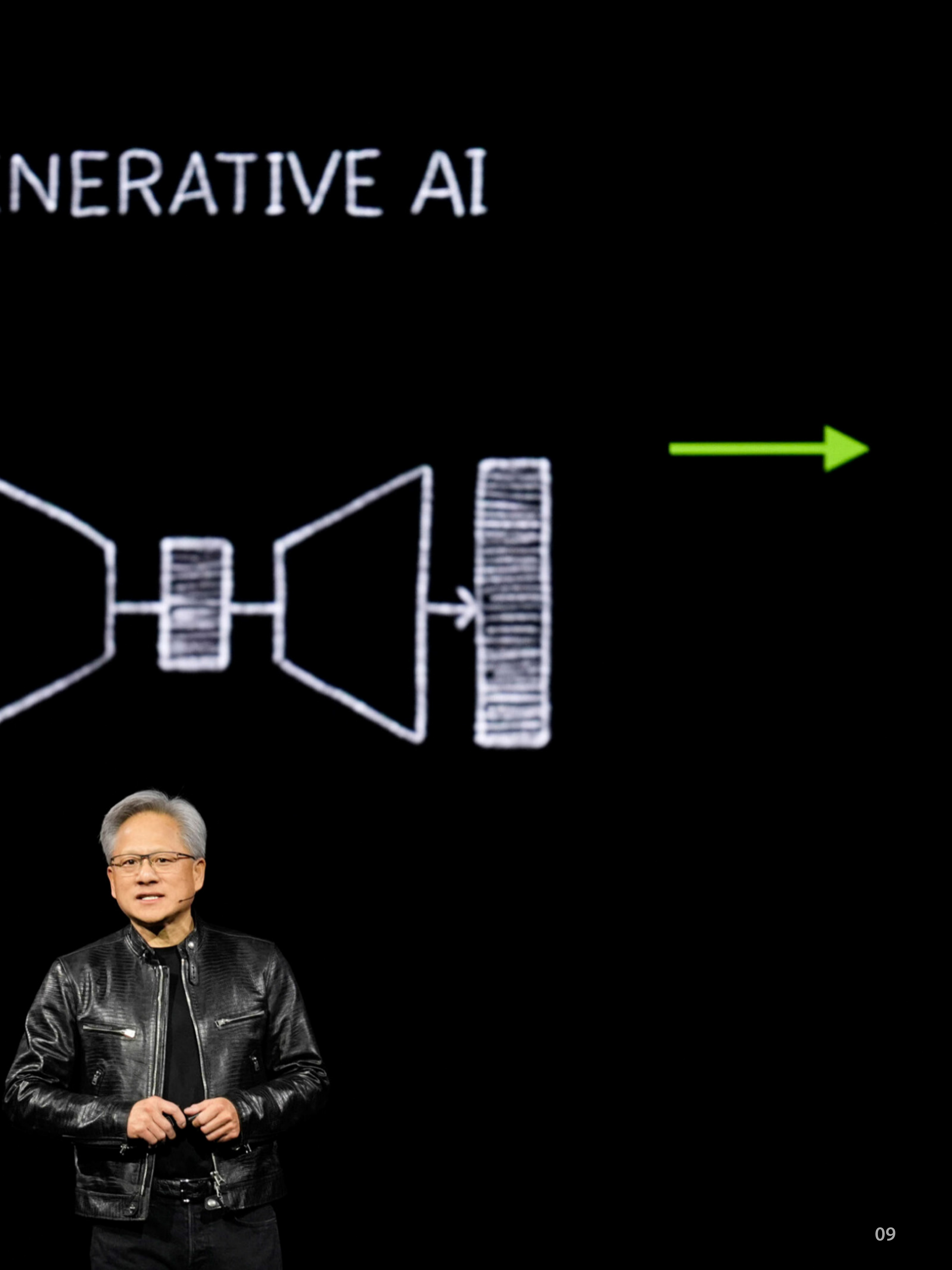


The company, based in Santa Clara, California, carved out an early lead in the hardware and software needed to tailor its technology to AI applications, partly because founder and CEO Jensen Huang began to nudge the company into what was then seen as a still half-baked technology more than a decade ago. It also makes chips for gaming and cars.

The company now boasts the third highest market value on Wall Street, behind only Microsoft and Apple.

“Nvidia defies gravity again,” Jacob Bourne, an analyst with Emarketer, said of the quarterly report. While many tech companies are eager to reduce their dependence on Nvidia, which has achieved a level of hardware dominance in AI rivaling that of earlier computing pioneers such as Intel Corp., “they’re not quite there yet,” he added.

Image: Eric Risberg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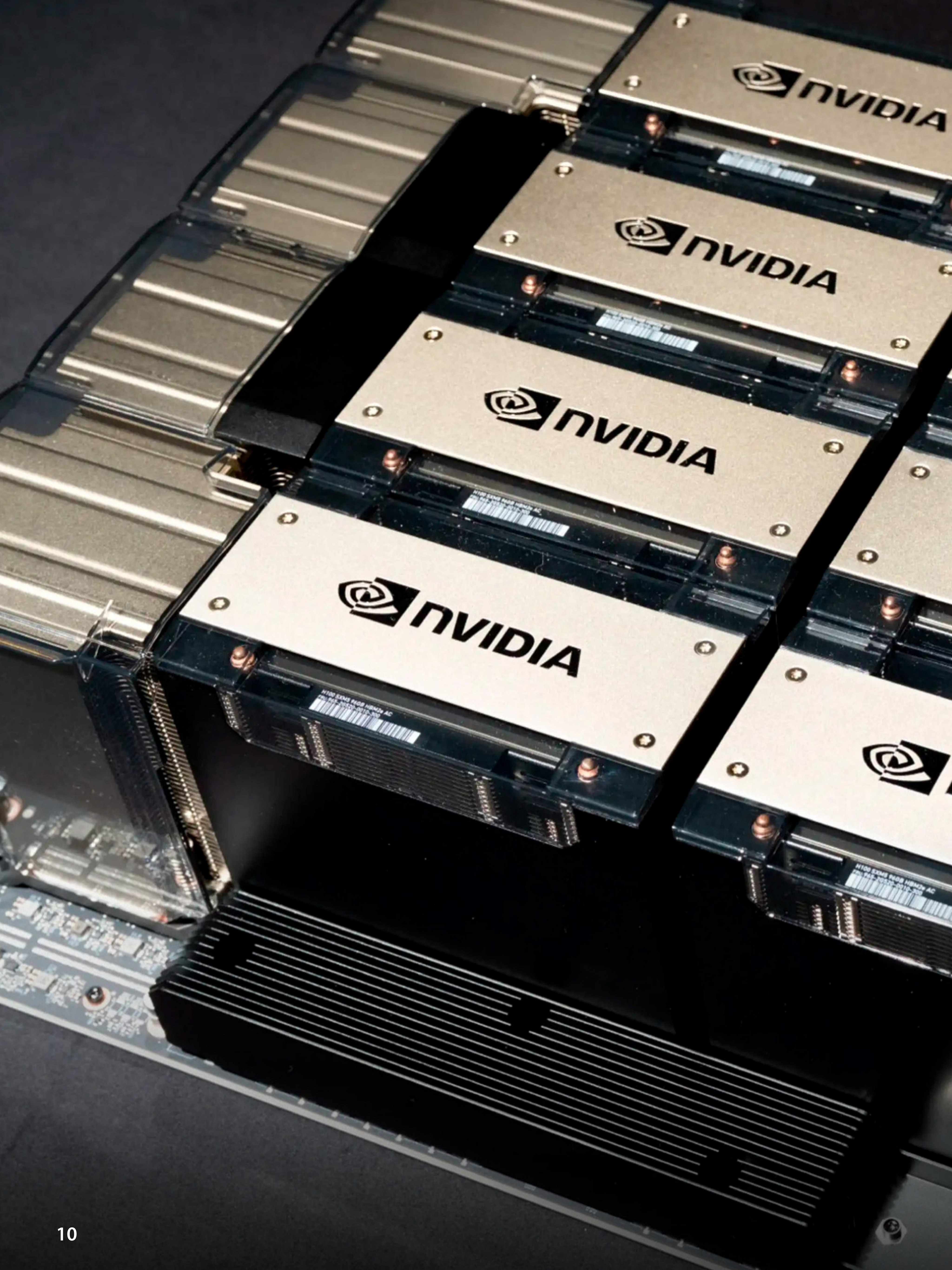
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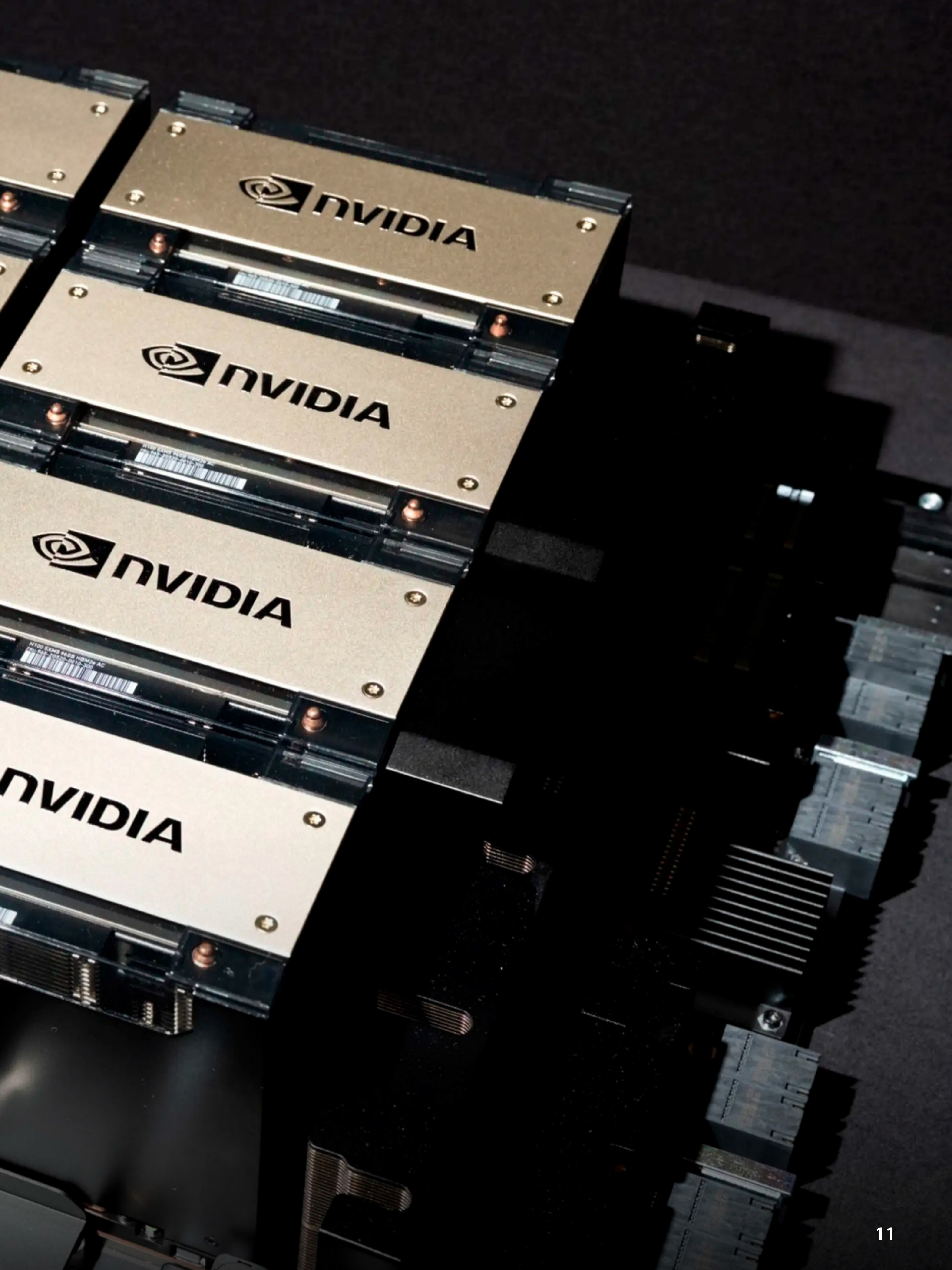
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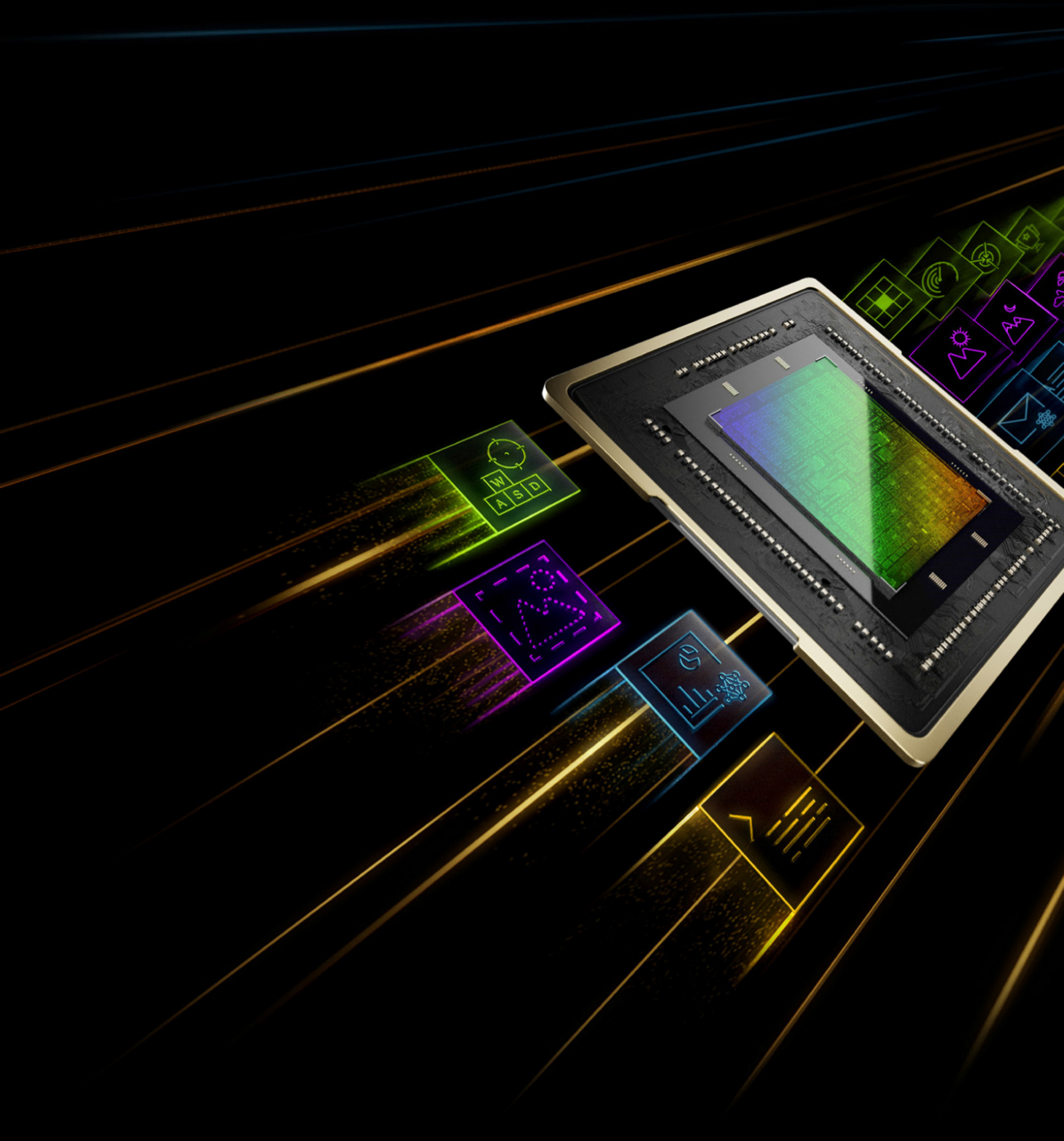
W
A S D

Demand for generative AI systems that can compose documents, make images and serve as increasingly lifelike personal assistants has fueled astronomical sales of Nvidia's specialized AI chips over the past year. Tech giants Amazon, Google, Meta and Microsoft have all signaled they will need to spend more in coming months on the chips and data centers needed to train and operate their AI systems.

What happens after that could be another matter. Some analysts believe the breakneck race to build those huge data centers will eventually peak, potentially spelling trouble for Nvidia in the aftermath.

"The biggest question that remains is how long this runway is," Third Bridge analyst Lucas Keh wrote in a research note. AI workloads in the cloud will eventually shift from training to inference, or the more everyday task of processing fresh data using already trained AI systems, he noted. And inference doesn't require the level of power provided by Nvidia's expensive top-of-the-line chips, which will open up market opportunities for chipmakers offering less powerful, but also less costly, alternatives.

When that happens, Keh wrote, "Nvidia's dominant market share position will be tested."

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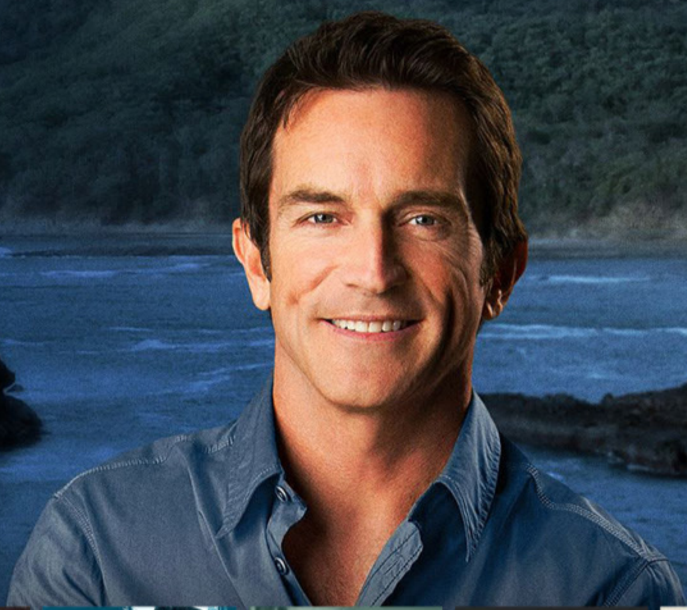

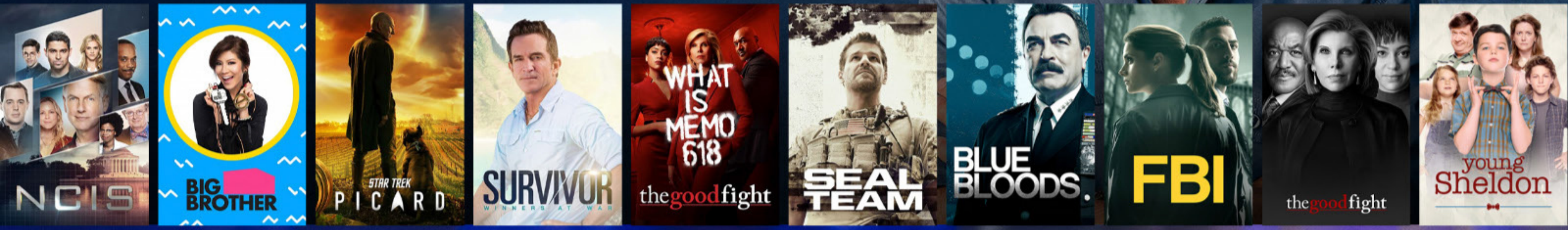
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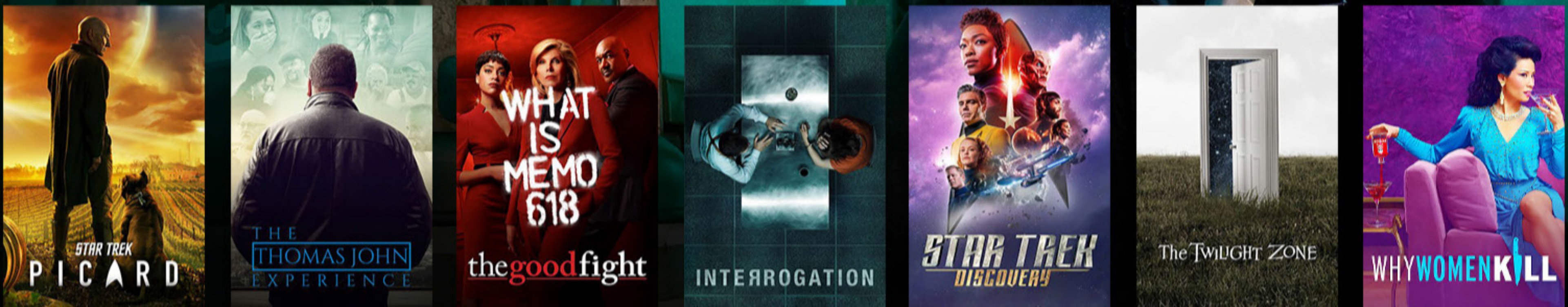
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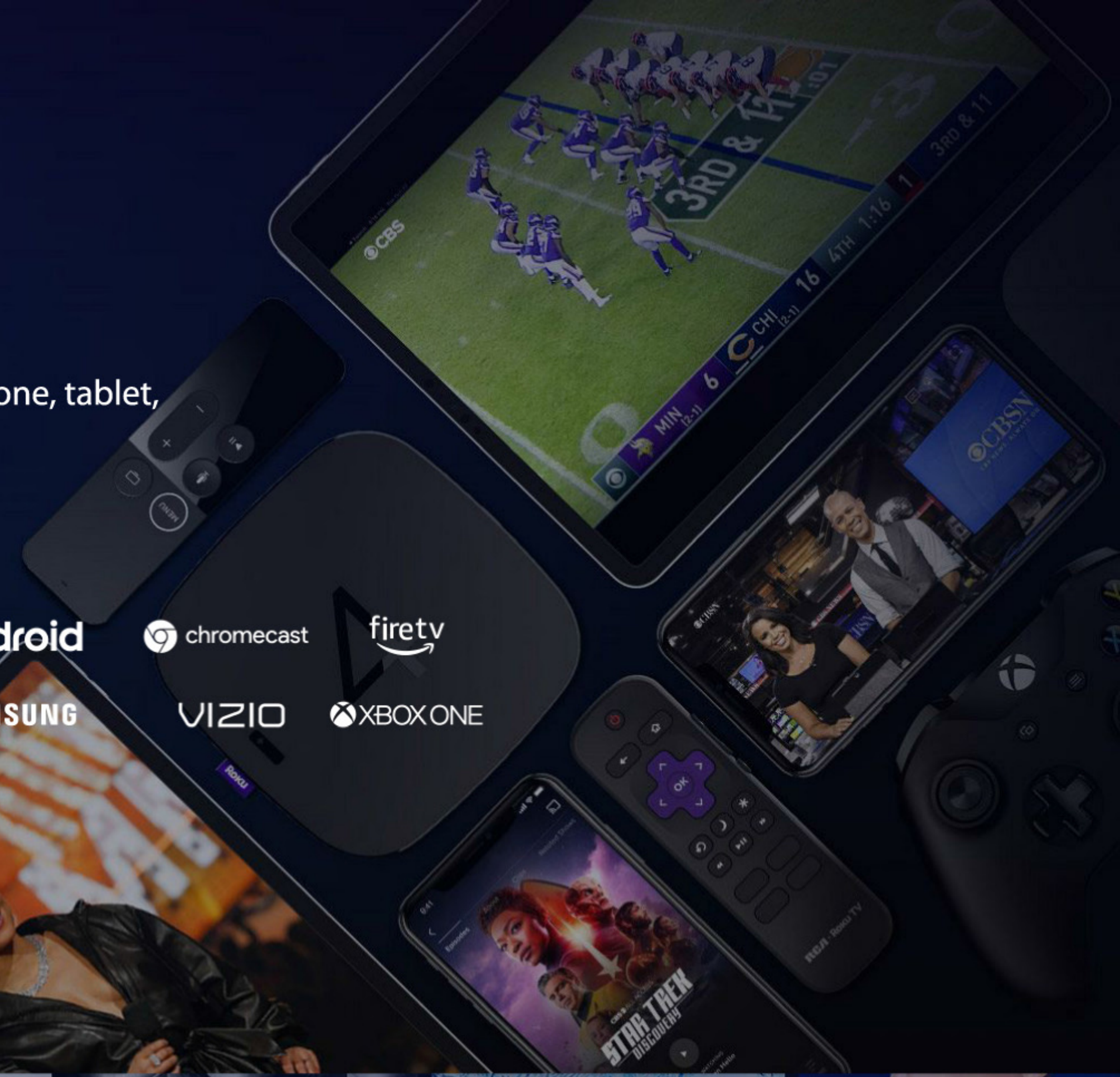

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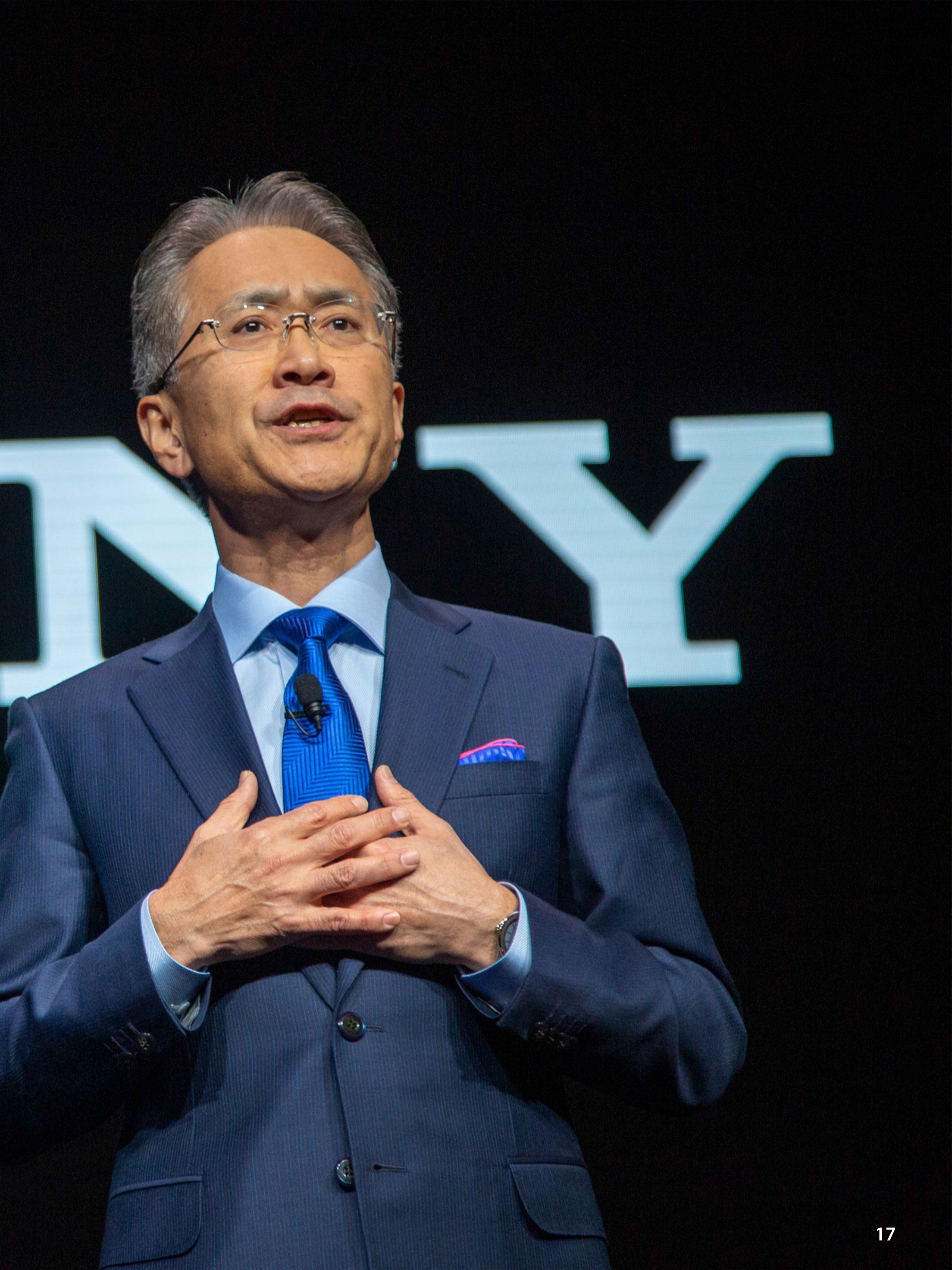
SONY SAYS FOCUS IS ON CREATIVITY, WITH GAMES, MOVIES, MUSIC, SENSORS, IP, AND NOT GADGETS


NY

Paramount

Japanese electronics and entertainment company Sony says it's focusing on creativity in movies, animation and video games, rather than old-fashioned gadgetry.

Its chief executive, Kenichiro Yoshida, outlined the company's strategy Thursday, saying Sony was helping creative professionals deliver what he called "kando," or a moving experience.

Yoshida did not speak about reports Tokyo-based Sony and Apollo Global Management are interested in buying Paramount Global.

Yoshida said the company is now emphasizing the creative process itself instead of prized products of the past like the Walkman portable music player and Trinitron color TVs. He said "synergies" are no longer between entertainment and electronics, but determined by intellectual property spanning animation, music, games and films.

"We will continue to support people's creativity through our technology," he said in an online briefing.

Sony is adapting to tougher times, with rivals making cheaper but competitive electronics. Critics say venturing into movies, music and other entertainment can be unprofitable.

Starting with its acquisition of EMI Music Publishing in 2018, Sony has invested approximately 1.5 trillion yen ($10 billion) in the last six years to strengthen its content creation.

In 2021 it acquired Crunchyroll, which has more than 13 million paid subscribers and delivers Japanese animation globally. Another was Yoasobi, a Japanese music duo that includes Vocaloid technology, or singing voice synthesizer software, and is attracting global fans.

Sony's real-time computing technology that records "this moment," as Yoshida put it, is being used in cameras at sports events because it can capture quickly moving subjects without distortion.

It's also used for news coverage and editing and in 3D video and computer graphics, including hit movies like "Godzilla Minus One," and games based on human athletes' movements, according to Yoshida.

Sony recently reported its quarterly profit rose to 189 billion yen ($1.2 billion) from 141 billion yen the year before. Quarterly sales for the maker of the PlayStation game machines rose 14% to 3.48 trillion yen ($22 billion).

But for the fiscal year through March, Sony recorded a 3% decline in profit at 970 billion yen ($6.2 billion) due to a weak performance in its financial services segment, which will be partially spun off next year.

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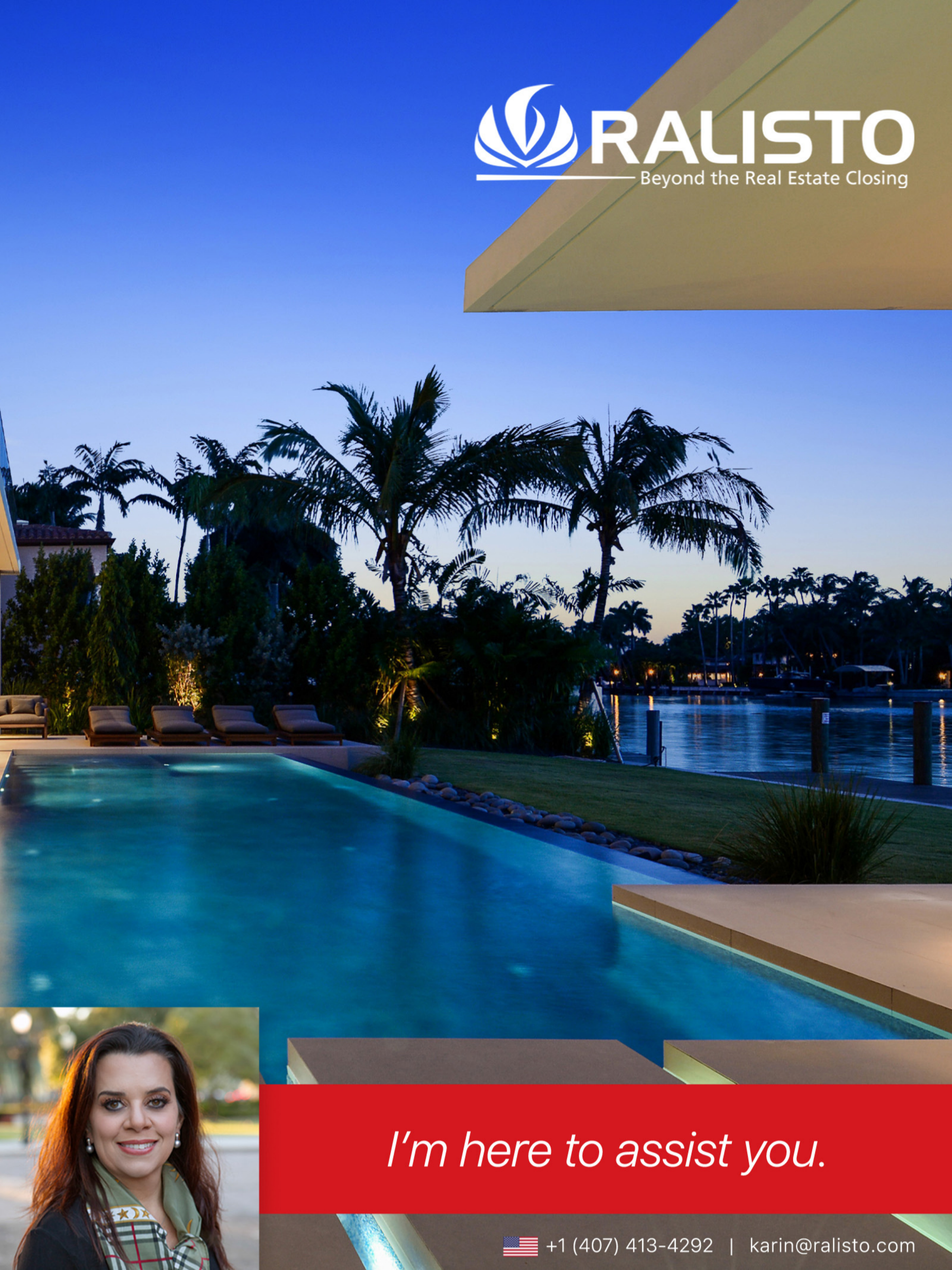
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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT SAYS ILLEGAL MONOPOLY BY TICKETMASTER AND LIVE NATION DRIVES UP PRICES FOR FANS

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The Justice Department filed a sweeping antitrust lawsuit against Ticketmaster and parent company Live Nation Entertainment on Thursday, accusing them of running an illegal monopoly over live events in America — squelching competition and driving up prices for fans.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Manhattan, was being brought with 30 state and district attorneys general and seeks to break up the monopoly they say is squeezing out smaller promoters and hurting artists.

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“We allege that Live Nation relies on unlawful, anticompetitive conduct to exercise its monopolistic control over the live events industry in the United States at the cost of fans, artists, smaller promoters, and venue operators,” Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement. “The result is that fans pay more in fees, artists have fewer opportunities to play concerts, smaller promoters get squeezed out, and venues have fewer real choices for ticketing services. It is time to break up Live Nation-Ticketmaster.”

The Justice Department accuses Live Nation of a slew of practices that allow it to maintain a stronghold over the live music scene, including using long-term contracts to keep venues from choosing rival ticketers, blocking venues from using multiple ticket sellers and threatening venues that they could lose money and fans if they don’t choose Ticketmaster. The Justice Department says Live Nation also threatened to retaliate against one firm if it didn’t stop a subsidiary from competing for artist promotion contracts.

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Live Nation has denied that it engages in practices that violate antitrust laws. When it was reported that the company was under federal investigation in 2022, the concert promoter said in a statement that Ticketmaster enjoys a such a large share of the market because of "the large gap that exists between the quality of the Ticketmaster system and the next best primary ticketing system."

But competitor ticket sellers have long complained that Live Nation makes it difficult for them to disrupt the market with practices such as withholding acts if those venues don't agree to use Ticketmaster's service.

The lawsuit is the latest example of the Biden administration's aggressive antitrust enforcement approach targeting companies accused of engaging in illegal monopolies that box out competitors and drive up prices. In March, the Justice Department filed a lawsuit against Apple alleging that the tech giant has monopoly power in the smartphone market. The Democratic administration has also taken on Google, Amazon and other tech giants.

"Today's action is a step forward in making this era of live music more accessible for the fans, the artists, and the industry that supports them," Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said in a statement.

Ticketmaster, which merged with Live Nation in 2010, is the world's largest ticket seller, processing 500 million tickets each year in more than 30 countries. Around 70% of tickets for major concert venues in the U.S. are sold through Ticketmaster, according to data in a federal lawsuit filed by consumers in 2022.

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The company owns or controls more than 265 of North America's concert venues and dozens of top amphitheaters, according to the Justice Department.

The ticket seller sparked outrage in November 2022 when its site crashed during a presale event for a Taylor Swift stadium tour. The company said its site was overwhelmed by both fans and attacks from bots, which were posing as consumers to scoop up tickets and sell them on secondary sites. The debacle prompted congressional hearings and bills in state legislatures aimed at better protecting consumers.

The Justice Department allowed Live Nation and Ticketmaster to merge as long as Live Nation agreed not to retaliate against concert venues for using other ticket companies for 10 years. In 2019, the department investigated and found that Live Nation had "repeatedly" violated that agreement and extended the prohibition on retaliating against concert venues to 2025.

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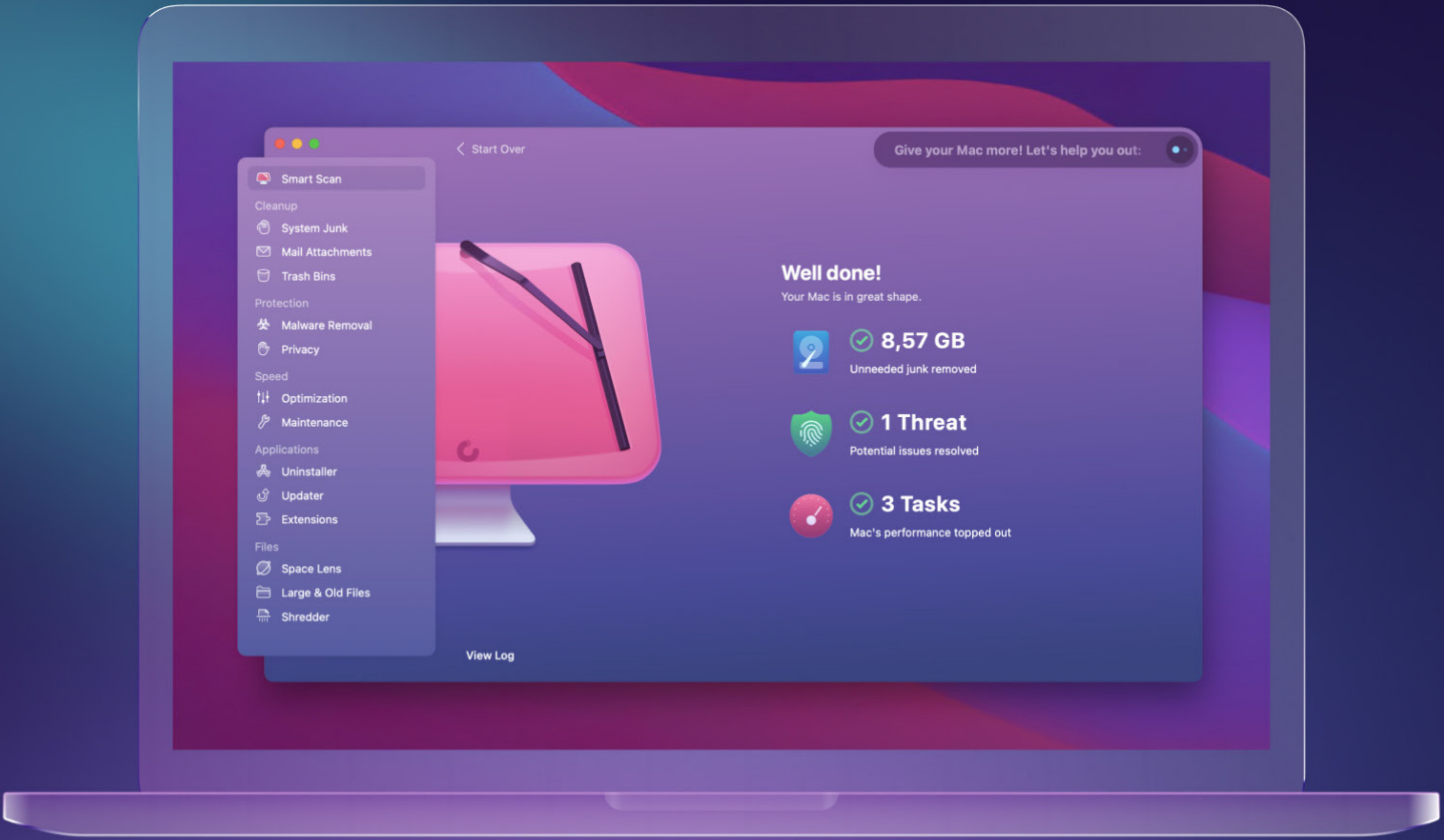
Image: Brendan McDermid



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EV MAKER TESLA BREAKS GROUND ON MEGAPACK ENERGY STORAGE BATTERY FACTORY IN SHANGHAI

Tower 2

ESLA

Electric vehicle maker Tesla has begun construction of a factory in Shanghai to make its Megapack energy storage batteries, Chinese state media reported Thursday.

The $200 million plant in Shanghai's Lingang pilot free trade zone will be the first Tesla battery plant outside the United States.

Tesla opened an EV plant in Shanghai in 2019 that assembles cars for China, Europe and other overseas markets. It is the No. 2 seller in the booming Chinese market for electric vehicles. The market leader is Chinese auto company BYD.

The state-run Xinhua News Agency lauded Tesla's commitment to investing in China and "defying the rhetoric of 'decoupling' and 'de-risking' from China."

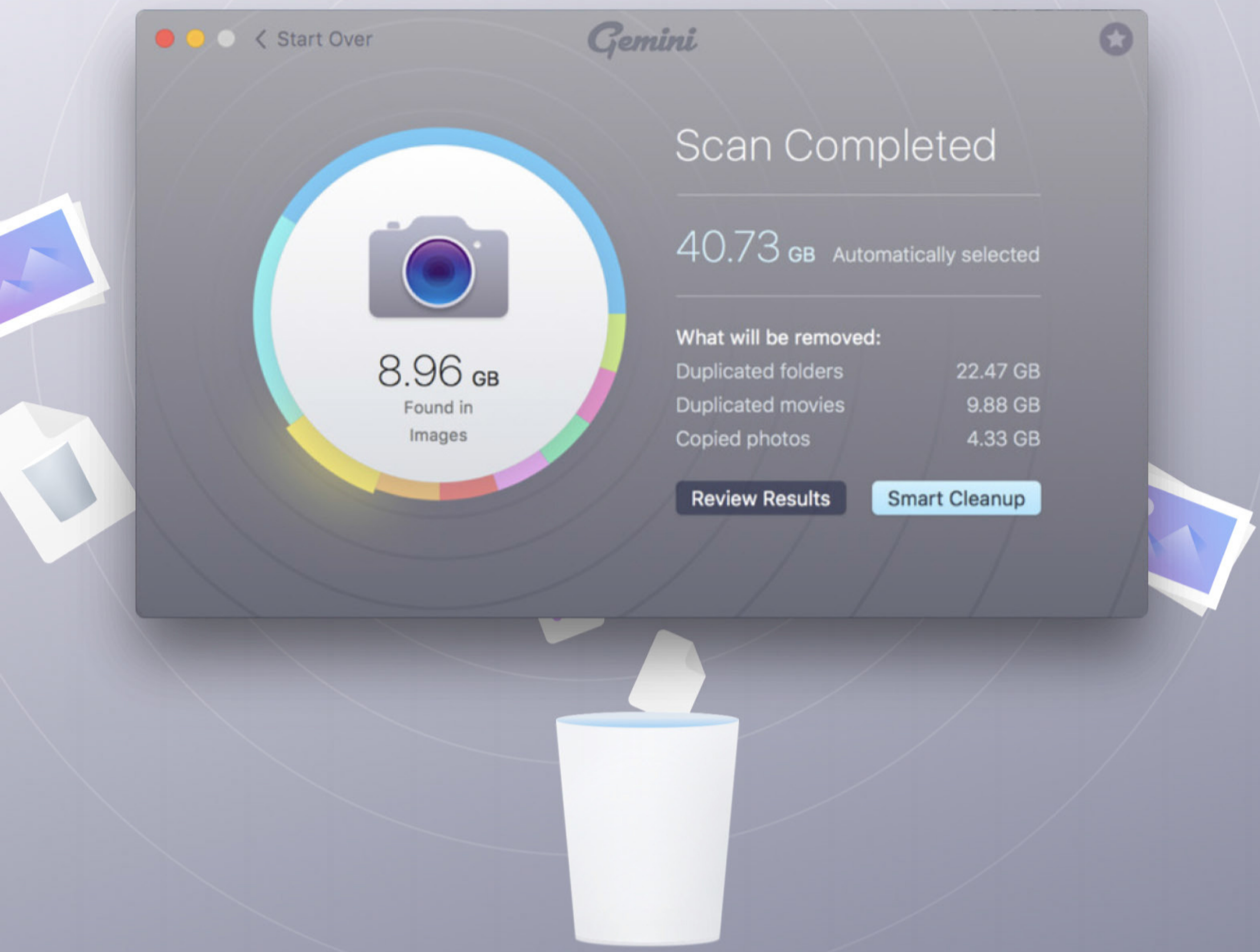
It said the factory was slated to start mass production in early 2025, with an initial capacity of 10,000 Megapack units a year.

According to Tesla's website, each Megapack can store more than 3.9 megawatt hours of energy — enough to power an average of 3,600 homes for one hour. They are designed mainly for utility companies and commercial facilities.

Such storage units have become increasingly important with the growth in solar and wind energy, which only generate electricity when weather conditions are favorable and need to store it for when residential and commercial users need it.

China is by far the world leader in installing wind and solar capacity, making it a major market for energy storage.

TESLA



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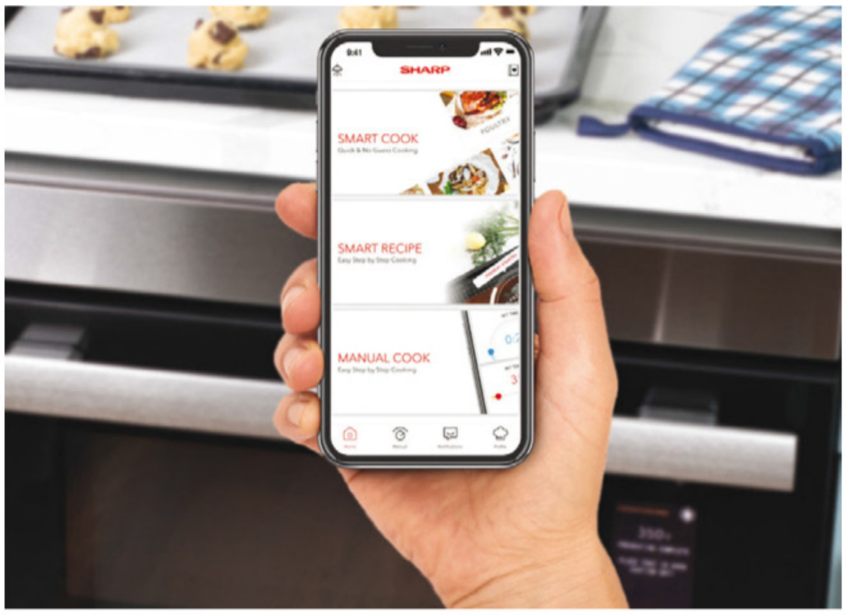

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Q&A: CIA'S CHIEF TECHNOLOGIST'S CAUTIOUS EMBRACE OF GENERATIVE AI

Image: Tom Brenner

Knowledge advantage can save lives, win wars and avert disaster. At the Central Intelligence Agency, basic artificial intelligence – machine learning and algorithms – has long served that mission. Now, generative AI is joining the effort.

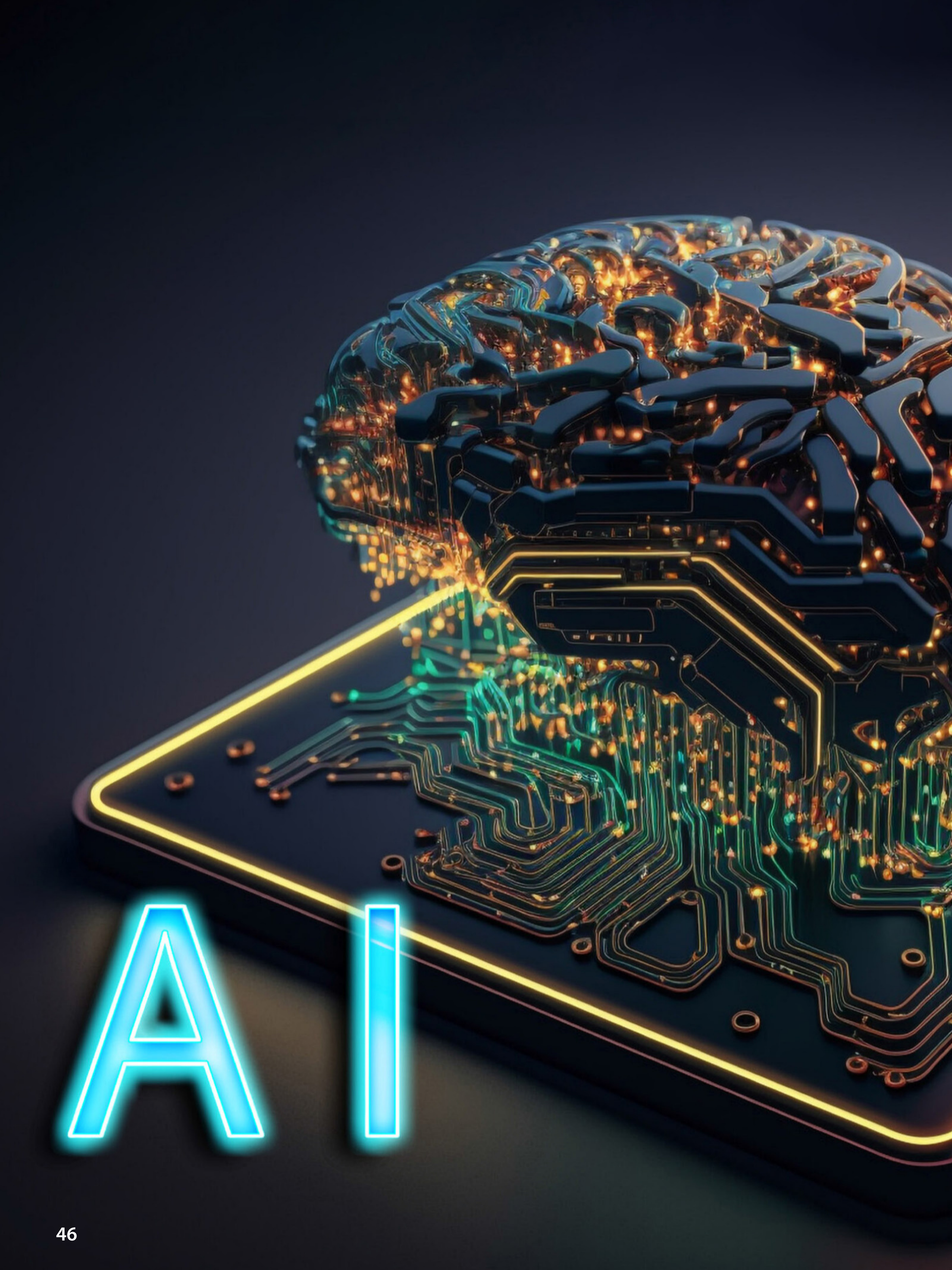
CIA Director William Burns says AI tech will augment humans, not replace them. The agency's first chief technology officer, Nand Mulchandani, is marshaling the tools. There's considerable urgency: Adversaries are already spreading AI-generated deepfakes aimed at undermining U.S. interests.

A former Silicon Valley CEO who helmed successful startups, Mulchandani was named to the job in 2022 after a stint at the Pentagon's Joint Artificial Intelligence Center.

Among agency projects: A ChatGPT-like generative AI application that draws on open-source data (meaning unclassified, public or commercially available). Thousands of analysts across the 18-agency U.S. intelligence community use it. Other CIA projects that use large-language models are, unsurprisingly, secret.

This interview with Mulchandani has been edited for length and clarity.

Image: Amanda Andrade-Rhoades

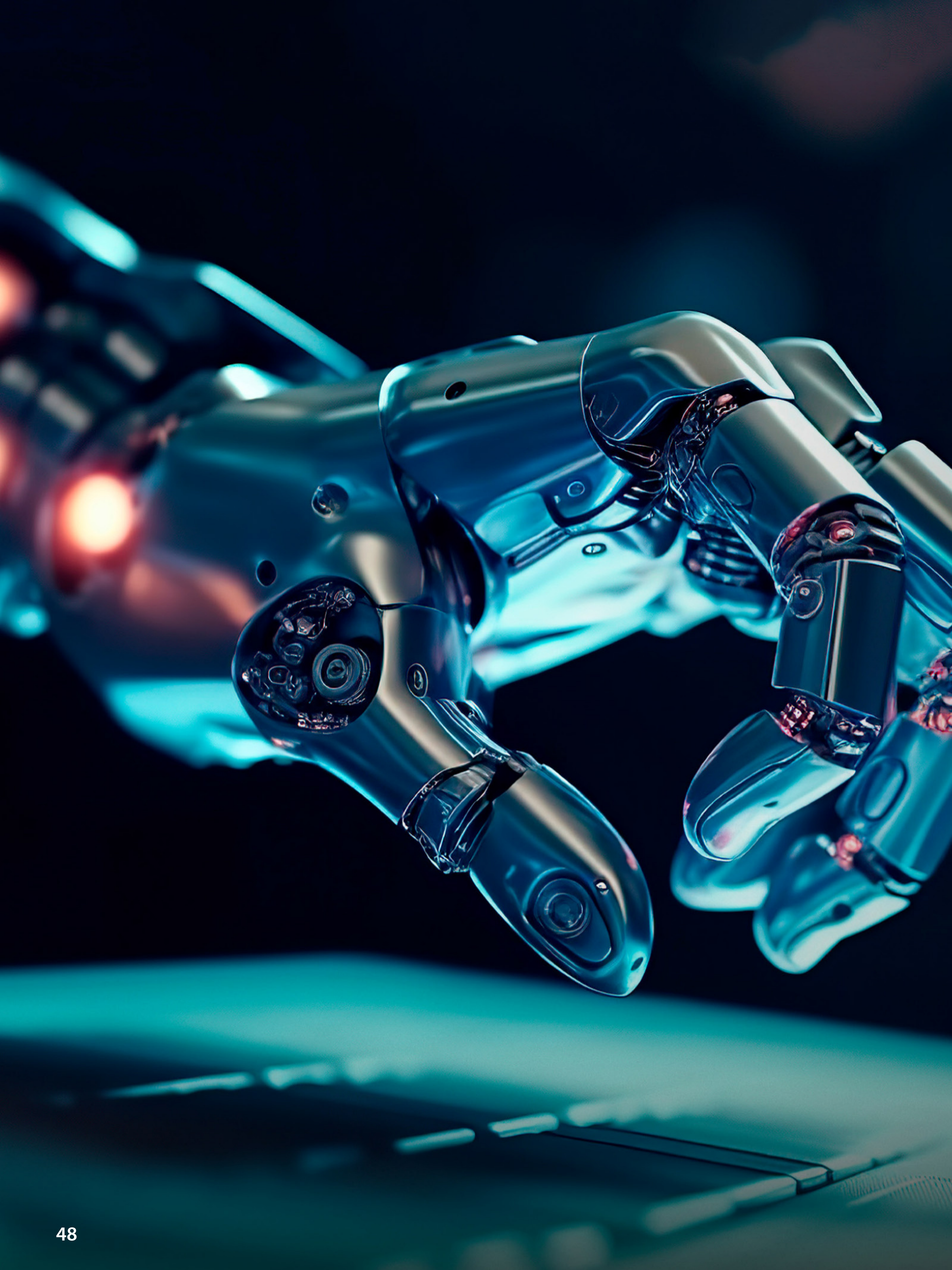

AI

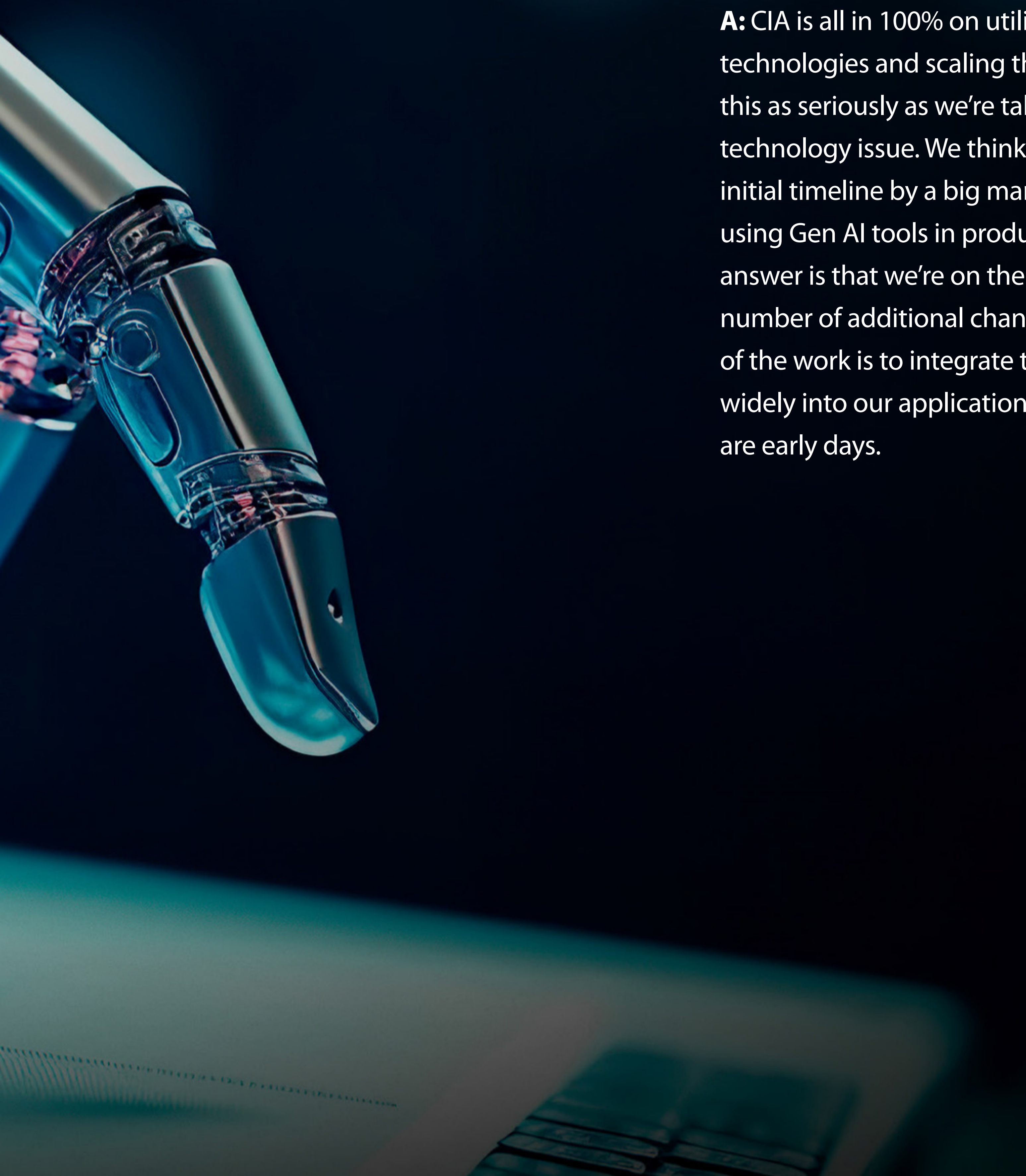
YOU RECENTLY SAID GENERATIVE AI SHOULD BE TREATED LIKE A "CRAZY, DRUNK FRIEND." CAN YOU ELABORATE?

A: When these generative AI systems "hallucinate," they can sometimes behave like your drunk friend at a bar who can say something that pushes you outside your normal conceptual boundary and sparks out-of-the box thinking. Remember that these AI-based systems are probabilistic in nature, so they are not precise (They are prone to fabrication). So for creative tasks like art, poetry, and painting these systems are excellent. But I wouldn't yet use these systems for doing precise math or designing an airplane or skyscraper - in those activities "close enough" doesn't work. They can also be biased and narrowly focused, which I call the "rabbit hole" problem.

THE ONLY CURRENT USE OF A LARGE-LANGUAGE MODEL AT ENTERPRISE SCALE I'M AWARE OF AT CIA IS THE OPEN-SOURCE AI, CALLED OSIRIS, THAT IT CREATED FOR THE ENTIRE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY. IS THAT CORRECT?

A: That's the only one we have disclosed publicly. It's been an absolute home run for us. We should broaden the discussion beyond just LLMs though -- as an example, we process huge amounts of foreign language content in multiple media types including video, and use other AI algorithms and tools to process that.





THE SPECIAL COMPETITIVE STUDIES PROJECT, A HIGH-POWERED ADVISORY GROUP FOCUSED ON AI IN NATIONAL SECURITY, IS OUT WITH A REPORT SAYING U.S. INTELLIGENCE SERVICES MUST RAPIDLY INTEGRATE GENERATIVE AI -- GIVEN ITS DISRUPTIVE POTENTIAL. IT SETS A TWO-YEAR TIMELINE FOR GETTING BEYOND EXPERIMENTATION AND LIMITED PILOT PROJECTS AND "DEPLOYING GEN AI TOOLS AT SCALE." DO YOU AGREE?

A: CIA is all in 100% on utilizing these technologies and scaling them. We are taking this as seriously as we're taking probably any technology issue. We think we've beaten the initial timeline by a big margin, as we're already using Gen AI tools in production. The deeper answer is that we're on the early side of a huge number of additional changes, and a large part of the work is to integrate the technology more widely into our applications and systems. These are early days.

CAN YOU NAME YOUR LARGE-LANGUAGE MODEL PARTNERS?

A: I'm not sure naming the vendors is interesting right now. There is an explosion of LLMs available on the market now. As a smart customer, we are not tying our boat to a specific set of LLMs or a specific set of vendors. We are evaluating and using practically all the high-runner LLMs out there, both commercial-grade and open source. We are not viewing the LLM market as a singular one where a single lab is better than the others. As you're noting in the market, models are leapfrogging one another with each new release.

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT USE CASES AT CIA FOR LARGE-LANGUAGE MODELS?

A: Primary is summarization. It's impossible for an open-source analyst at CIA to digest the firehouse of media and other information we collect every day. So this has been a game-changer for insights into sentiment and global trends. Analysts then dig into specifics. They must be able — with full certainty — to annotate and explain data they cite and how they reach conclusions. Our tradecraft has not changed. The additional pieces give analysts much broader perspective – both the classified and open-source pieces we gather.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES OF ADAPTING GENERATIVE AI AT THE AGENCY?

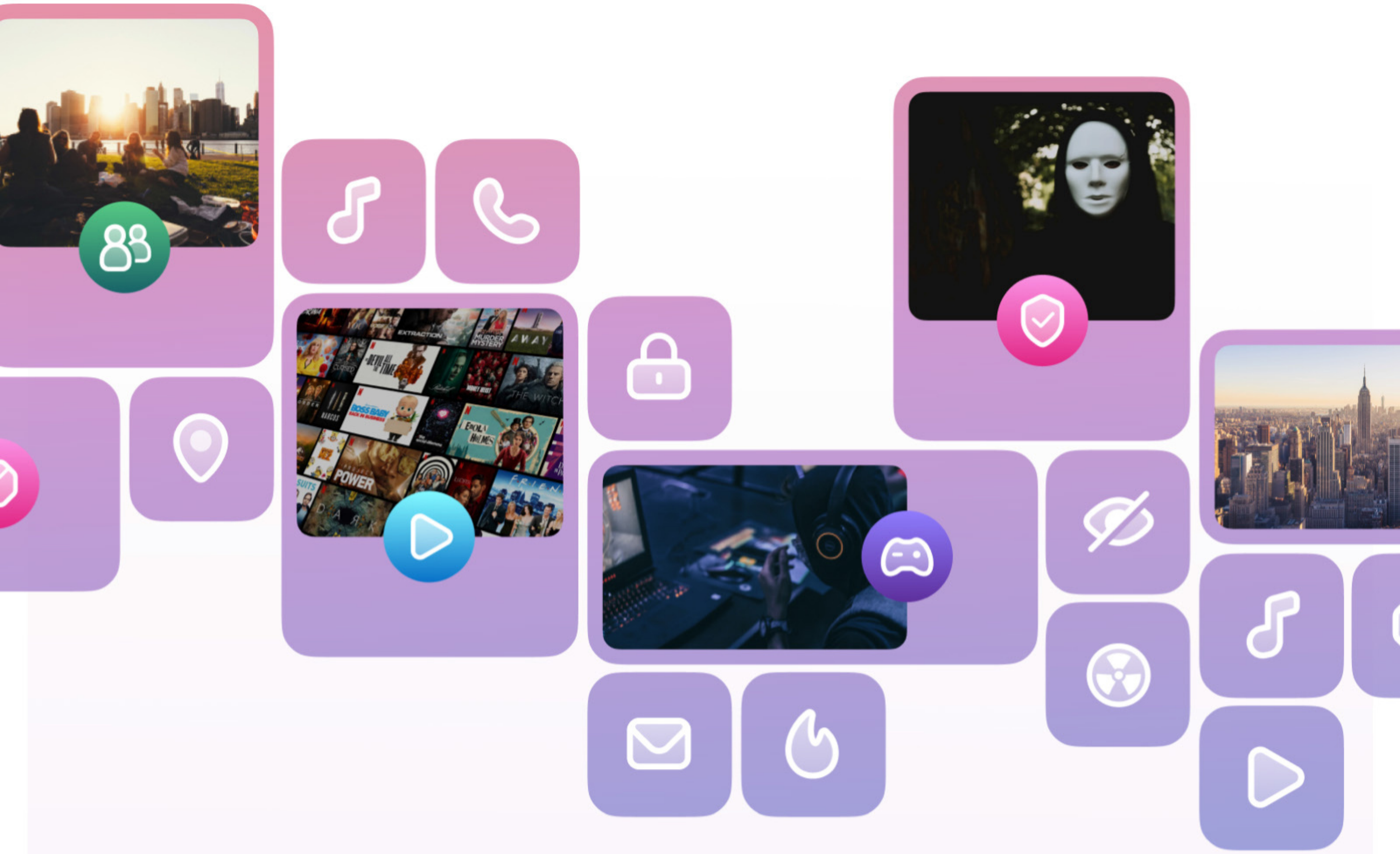
A: There isn't a lot of cultural resistance internally. Our employees deal with AI on a daily basis competitively. Obviously, the whole world is on fire with these new technologies and the amazing productivity gains. The trick is grappling with constraints we have on information compartmentalization and how systems are built. In many cases, the separation of data is not for security but legal reasons. How do we efficiently connect systems to get the benefits of AI while keeping all that intact? Some really interesting technologies are emerging to help us think this through – and combine data in ways that maintain encryption and privacy controls.

Image: Tom Williams

GENERATIVE AI IS CURRENTLY ABOUT AS SOPHISTICATED AS AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT. INTELLIGENCE WORK, BY CONTRAST, IS FOR GROWN-UPS. IT'S ALL ABOUT TRYING TO PIERCE AN ADVERSARY'S DECEPTION. HOW DOES GEN AI FIT INTO THAT WORK?

A: First, let's emphasize that the human analyst has primacy. We have the world's leading experts in their domains. And in many cases of incoming information, a huge amount of human judgment is involved to weigh its importance and significance – including of the individuals who may be providing it. We don't have machines replicate any of that. And we're not looking for computers to do the jobs of domain experts.

What we are looking at is the co-pilot model. We think Gen AI can have a huge impact in brainstorming, coming up with new ideas. And in boosting productivity – and insight. We have to be very deterministic about how we do it because, wielded properly, these algorithms are a force for good. But wielded incorrectly, they can really hurt you.



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FCC TO CONSIDER RULES FOR AI-GENERATED POLITICAL ADS ON TV AND RADIO, BUT CAN'T TOUCH STREAMING

The head of the Federal Communications Commission introduced on Wednesday a proposal to require political advertisers to disclose when they use content generated by artificial intelligence in broadcast television and radio ads.

If adopted by the five-person commission, the proposal would add a layer of transparency that many lawmakers and AI experts have been calling for as rapidly advancing generative AI tools churn out lifelike images, videos and audio clips that threaten to mislead voters in the upcoming U.S. election.

Yet the nation's top telecommunications regulator would only have authority over TV, radio and some cable providers. The new rules, if adopted, would not cover the tremendous growth in advertising on digital and streaming platforms.

"As artificial intelligence tools become more accessible, the commission wants to make sure consumers are fully informed when the technology is used," FCC chair Jessica Rosenworcel said in a statement Wednesday. "Today, I've shared with my colleagues a proposal that makes clear consumers have a right to know when AI tools are being used in the political ads they see, and I hope they swiftly act on this issue."

The proposal marks the second time this year that the commission has begun taking significant steps to combat the growing use of artificial intelligence tools in political communications. The FCC earlier confirmed that AI voice-cloning tools in robocalls are banned under existing law. That decision followed an incident in New Hampshire's primary election when automated calls used voice-cloning software to imitate President Joe Biden in order to dissuade voters from going to the polls.

If adopted, the proposal announced Wednesday would ask broadcasters to verify with political advertisers whether their content was generated using AI tools, such as text-to-image creators or voice-cloning software. The FCC has authority over political advertising on

4
OMMUNICATIONS COMMISS

broadcast channels under the 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act.

Left for commissioners to discuss are several details of the proposal, including whether broadcasters would have to disclose AI-generated content in an on-air message or only in the TV or radio station's political files, which are public. They also will be tasked with agreeing on a definition of AI-generated content, a challenge that has become fraught as retouching tools and other AI advancements become increasingly embedded in all kinds of creative software.

Rosenworcel hopes to have the regulations in place before the election.

Jonathan Uriarte, a spokesperson and policy adviser for Rosenworcel, said she is looking to define AI-generated content as that generated using computational technology or machine-based systems, "including, in particular, AI-generated voices that sound like human voices, and AI-generated actors that appear to be human actors." But he said her draft definition will likely change through the regulatory process.

The proposal comes as political campaigns already have experimented heavily with generative AI, from building chatbots for their websites to creating videos and images using the technology.

Last year, for example, the RNC released an entirely AI-generated ad meant to show a dystopian future under another Biden administration. It employed fake but realistic photos showing boarded-up storefronts,

armored military patrols in the streets and waves of immigrants creating panic.

Political campaigns and bad actors also have weaponized highly realistic images, videos and audio content to scam, mislead and disenfranchise voters. In India's elections, recent AI-generated videos misrepresenting Bollywood stars as criticizing the prime minister exemplify a trend AI experts say is cropping up in democratic elections around the world.

As generative AI has become more cheap, accessible and easy to use, bipartisan groups of lawmakers have called for legislation to regulate the technology in politics. With just a little over five months until the November elections, they still have not passed any bills.

A bipartisan bill introduced by Sen. Amy Klobuchar, a Democrat from Minnesota, and Sen. Lisa Murkowski, a Republican from Alaska, would require political ads to have a disclaimer if they are made or significantly altered using AI. It would require the Federal Election Commission to respond to violations.

Uriarte said Rosenworcel realizes the FCC's capacity to act on AI-related threats is limited but wants to do what she can ahead of the 2024 election.

"This proposal offers the maximum transparency standards that the commission can enforce under its jurisdiction," Uriarte said. "It is our hope that government agencies and lawmakers can build on this important first step in establishing a transparency standard on the use of AI in political advertising."

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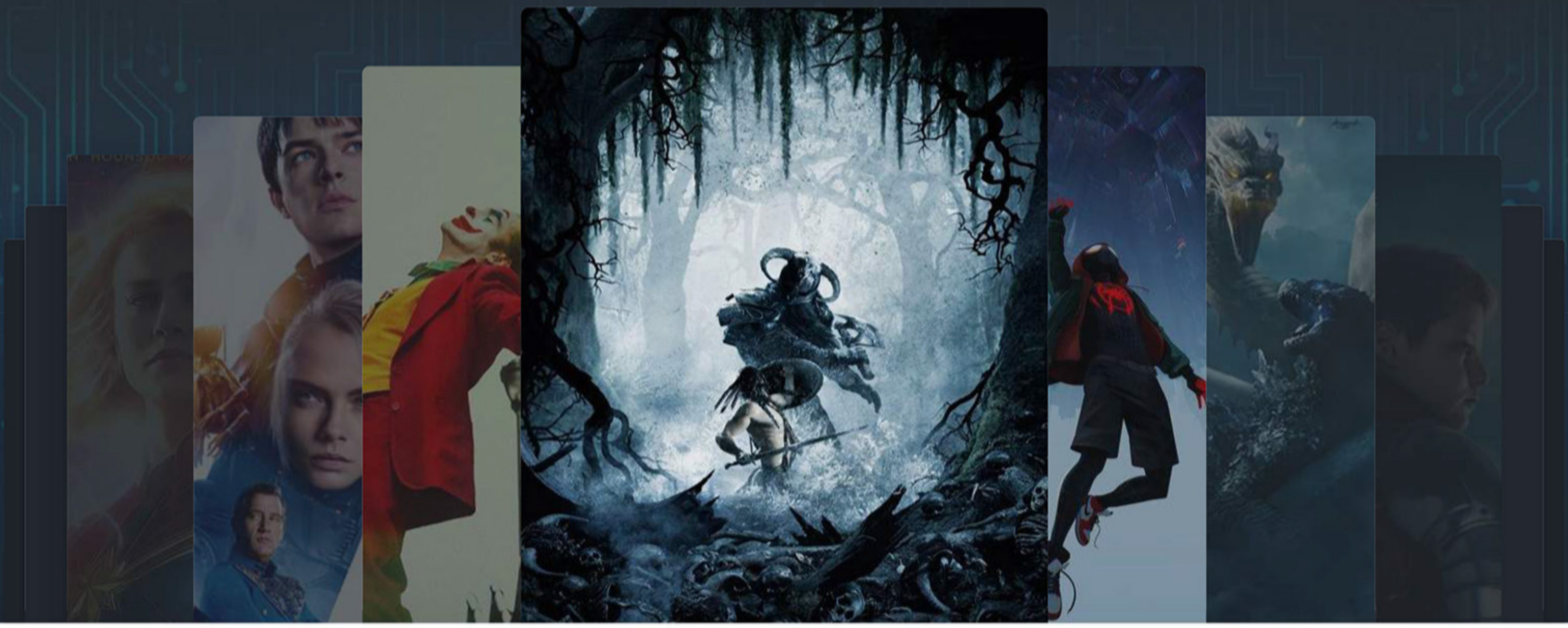

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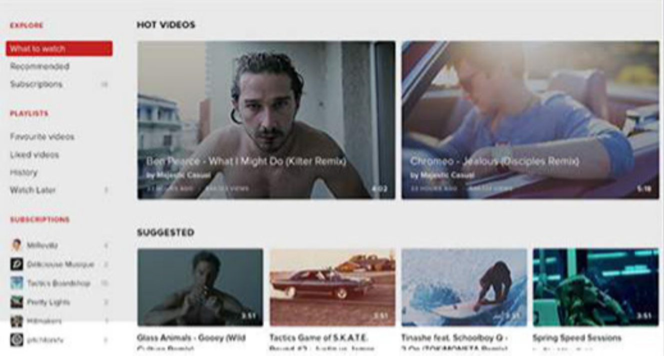

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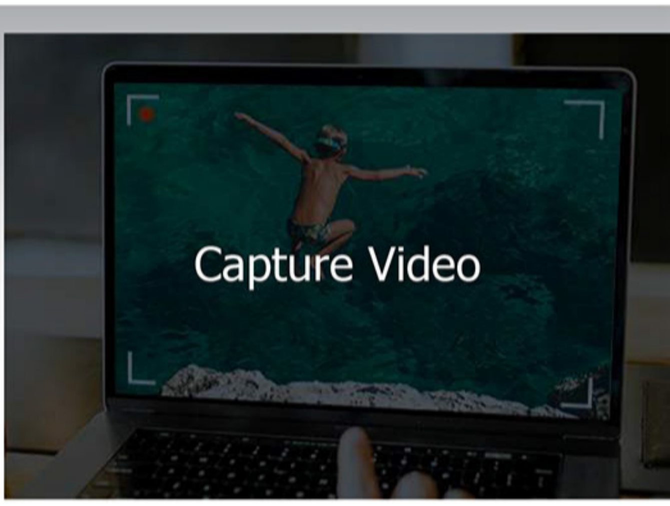

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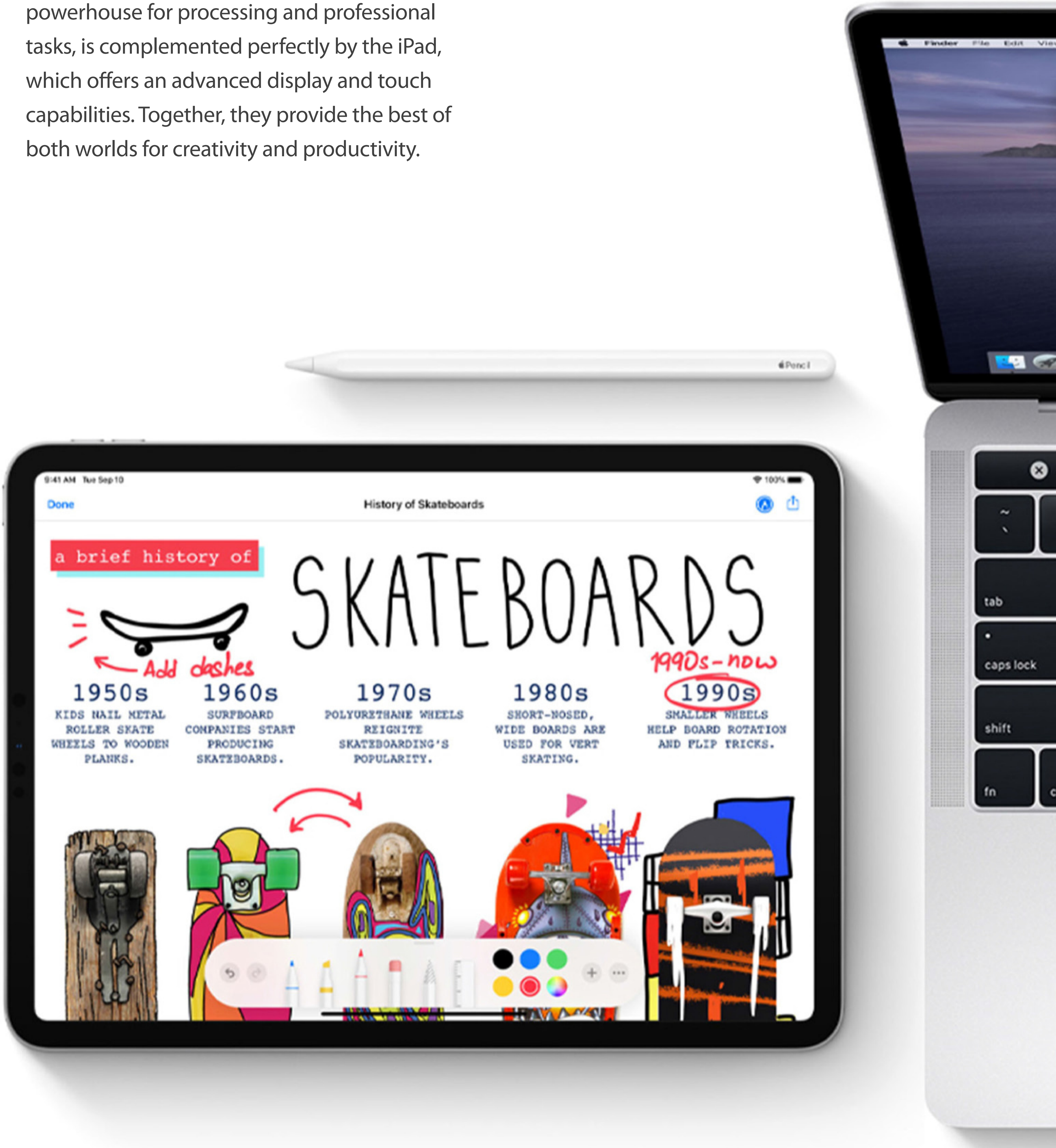
Mac + iPad

THE VERY BEST FEATURES OF BOTH PLATFORMS WORKING TOGETHER

Apple's ecosystem is renowned for its seamless integration between devices, with the Mac and iPad prime examples. The Mac, a powerhouse for processing and professional tasks, is complemented perfectly by the iPad, which offers an advanced display and touch capabilities. Together, they provide the best of both worlds for creativity and productivity.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KIDS NAIL METAL ROLLER SKATE WHEELS TO WOODEN PLANKS.
1960s
SURFBOARD COMPANIES START PRODUCING SKATEBOARDS.
1970s
POLYURETHANE WHEELS REIGNITE SKATEBOARDING'S POPULARITY.
1980s
SHORT-NOSED, WIDE BOARDS ARE USED FOR VERT SKATING.
1990s
SMALLER WHEELS HELP BOARD ROTATION AND FLIP TRICKS.
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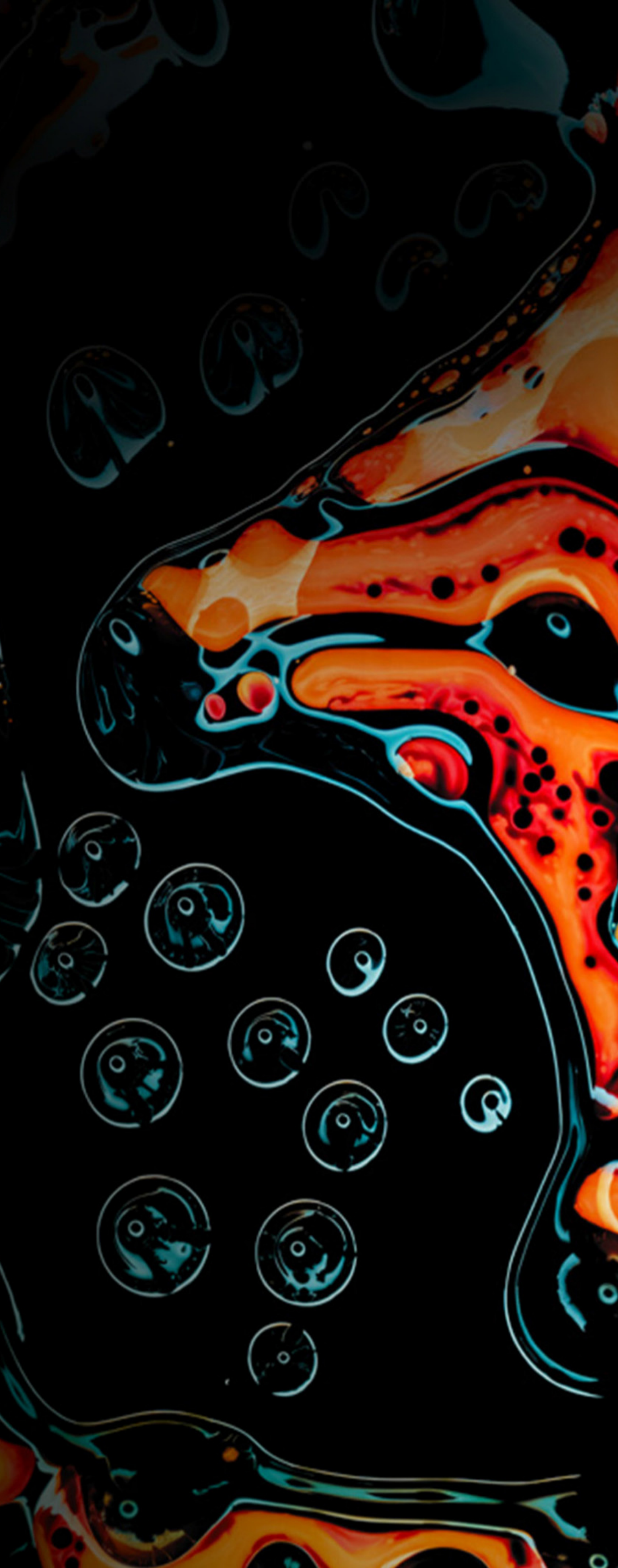
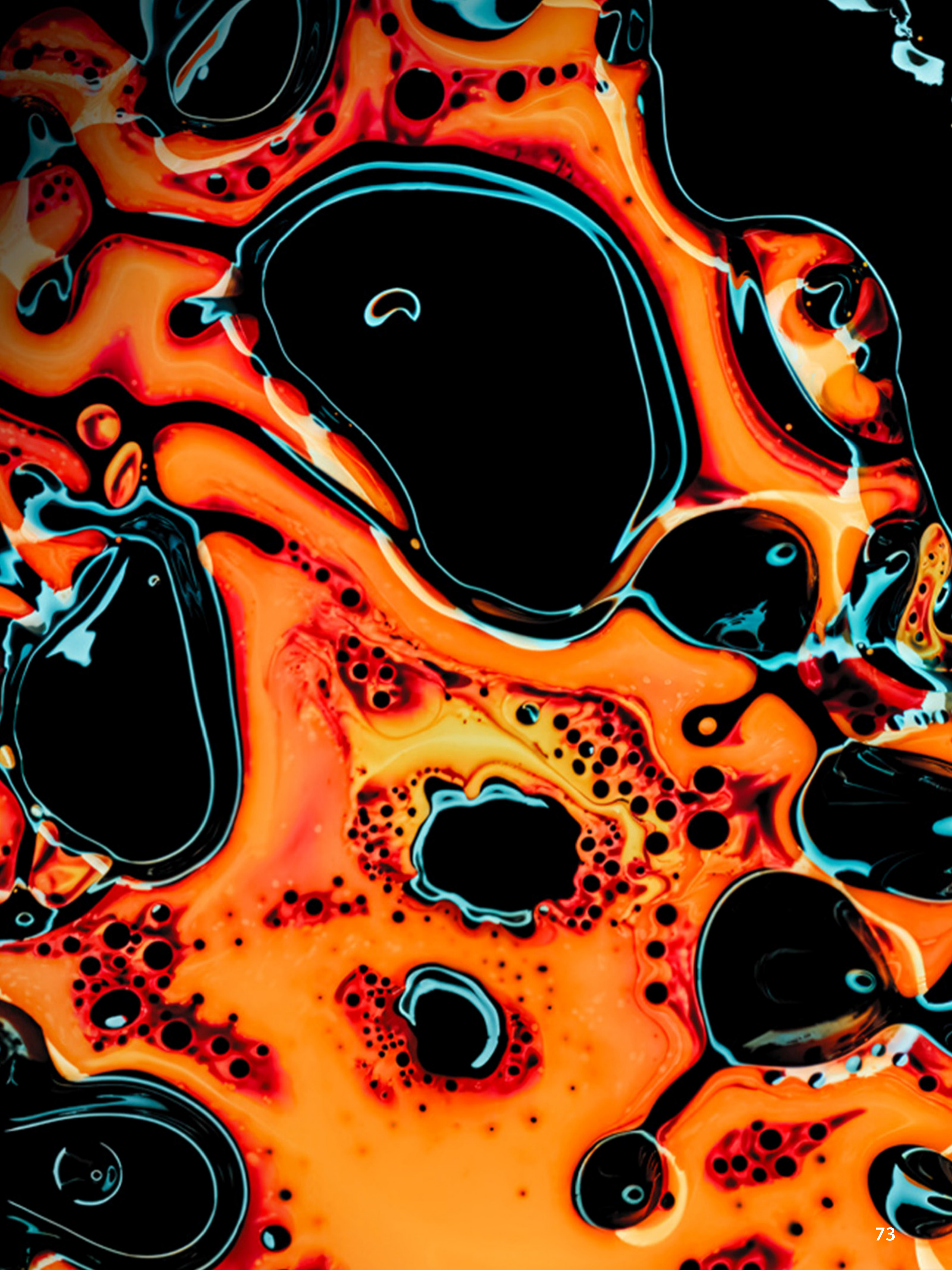
THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

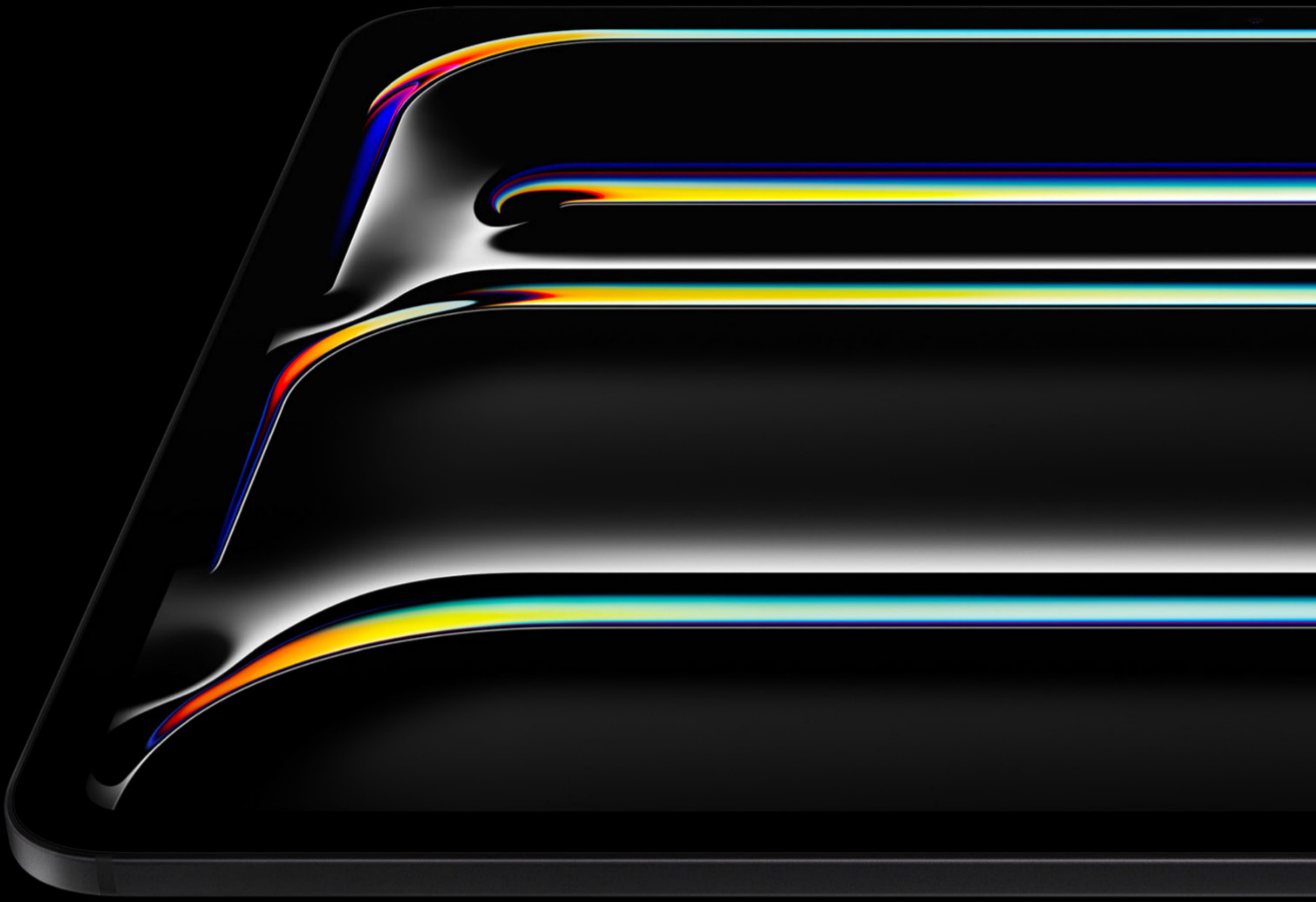
It's easy to see how the **iPad and the Mac could be positioned as competitors.** In short, the iPad is now a powerhouse machine that's head and shoulders above some of the world's most respected PC brands. But combine macOS and iPadOS, and you'll soon discover how the devices work in harmony rather than in competition, providing a holistic experience for users. The iPad Pro's screen technology has dramatically improved, incorporating Pro Display XDR-like features. The Pro Display XDR is Apple's high-end, professional-grade monitor, known for its extreme dynamic range (XDR) and excellent color accuracy. This technology has been miniaturized and adapted for the iPad Pro, providing users with a display that supports high brightness, deep blacks, and an extensive color gamut. The result is impressive and has **received strong praise from critics.** The latest innovation in the iPad Pro line is the introduction of **TANDEM OLED technology.** This combines two OLED panels to improve brightness and longevity while reducing power consumption. The result is a display that offers exceptional clarity, vibrant colors, and better battery life and screen quality performance. This makes the iPad Pro not just a tablet but a formidable external monitor for Mac users or a second screen when working on complicated tasks.

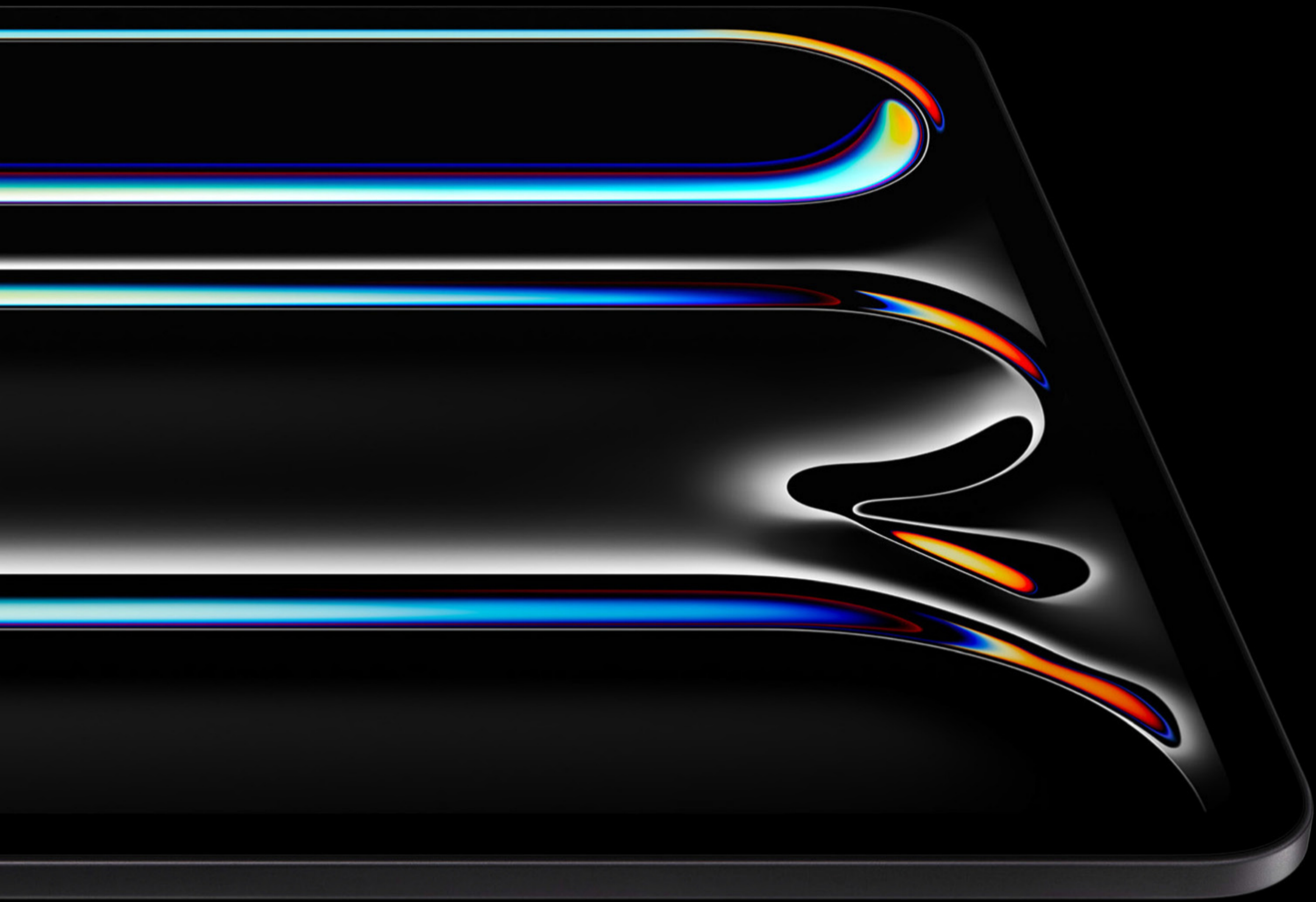
And Apple is keen to highlight that the Mac and iPad are not in competition. According to **Tom Boger, Apple's VP of iPad Product Marketing,** these devices are complementary, each excelling in different areas to create a more versatile computing environment. In an





interview with the Wall Street Journal, Boger said: "We don't see them as competing devices. We see them as complementary devices. The iPad has always been a touch-first device while the Mac is for indirect manipulation." That **puts to bed rumors Apple is working on a touchscreen Mac,** or that **macOS is coming to the iPad any time soon.**





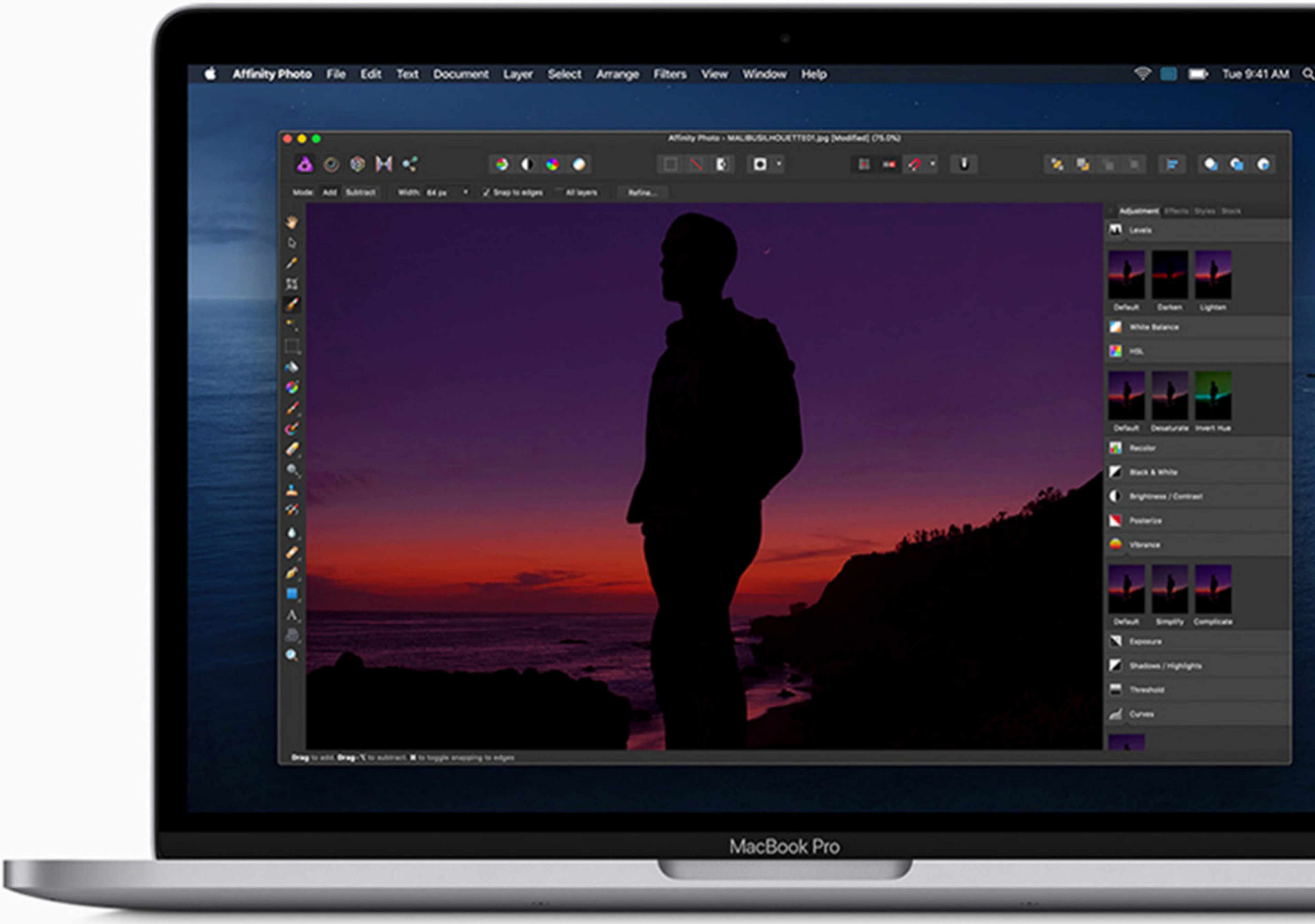
Quartet

Universal Control

EXTENDING THE MAC

Introduced with macOS Catalina, **Sidecar allows users to use an iPad to extend their Mac's screen.** This transforms the iPad into a second display, perfect for multitasking. With Sidecar, you can keep reference materials on the iPad while working on your Mac, enhancing productivity. The Apple Pencil can also be used with Sidecar for drawing, sketching, or annotating documents on the iPad, adding a tactile dimension to your workflow. Universal Control is **another feature that enhances the synergy between Mac and iPad.** This feature allows users to control multiple Apple devices with a single mouse and keyboard. You can seamlessly move your cursor and keyboard input between your Mac and iPad and drag and drop files between them. This interaction streamlines the workflow and bridges the gap between macOS and iPadOS.

Apple's ecosystem is designed to make transitioning between devices as smooth as possible. **Handoff allows you to start a task on one device and continue it on another.** For instance, you can begin writing an email on your Mac and finish it on your iPad. Other continuity features include **Universal Clipboard,** which lets you copy text, images, and videos on one device and paste them on another, and AirDrop, which facilitates quick file transfers between devices. These features make the iPad and Mac indispensable.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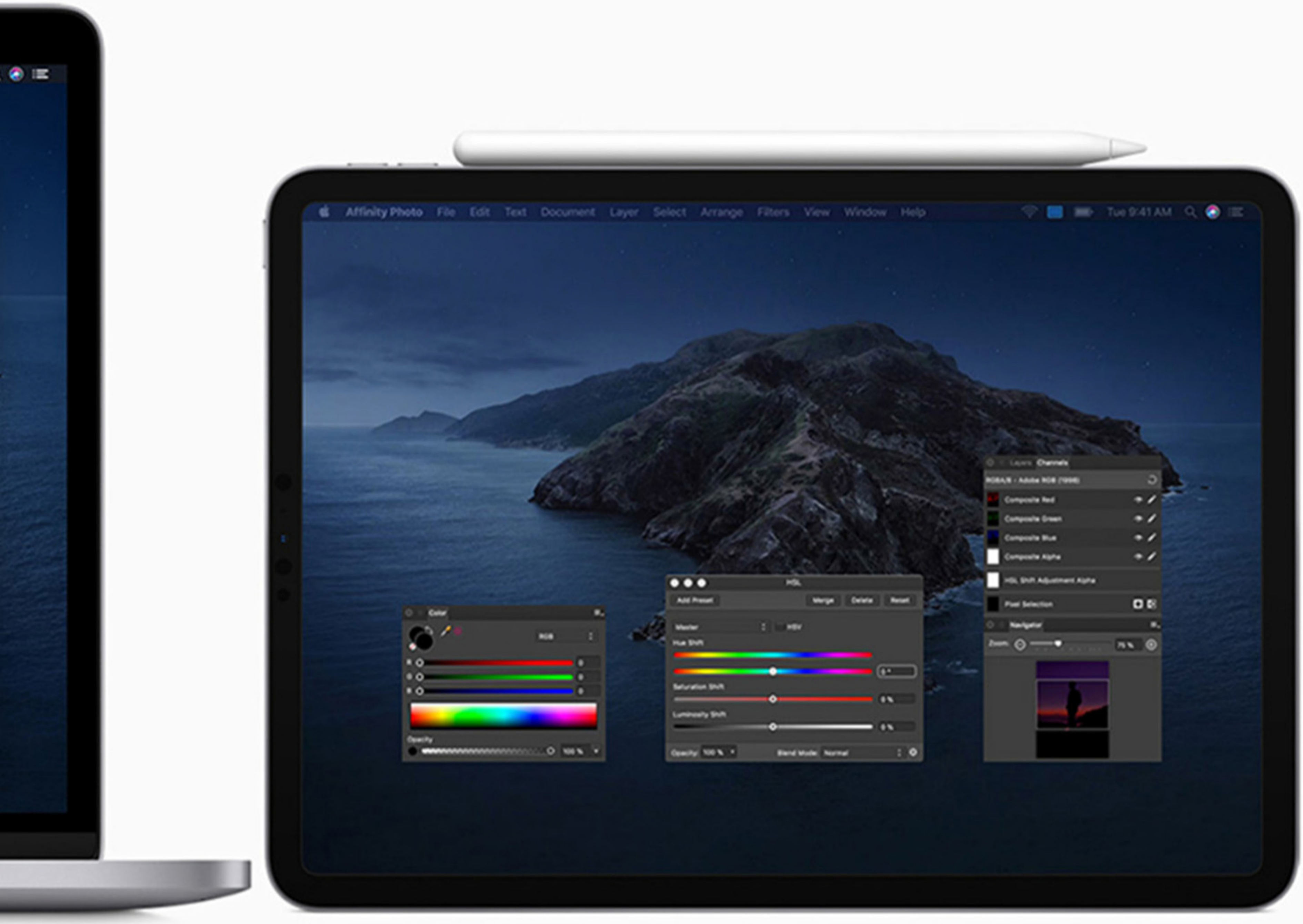
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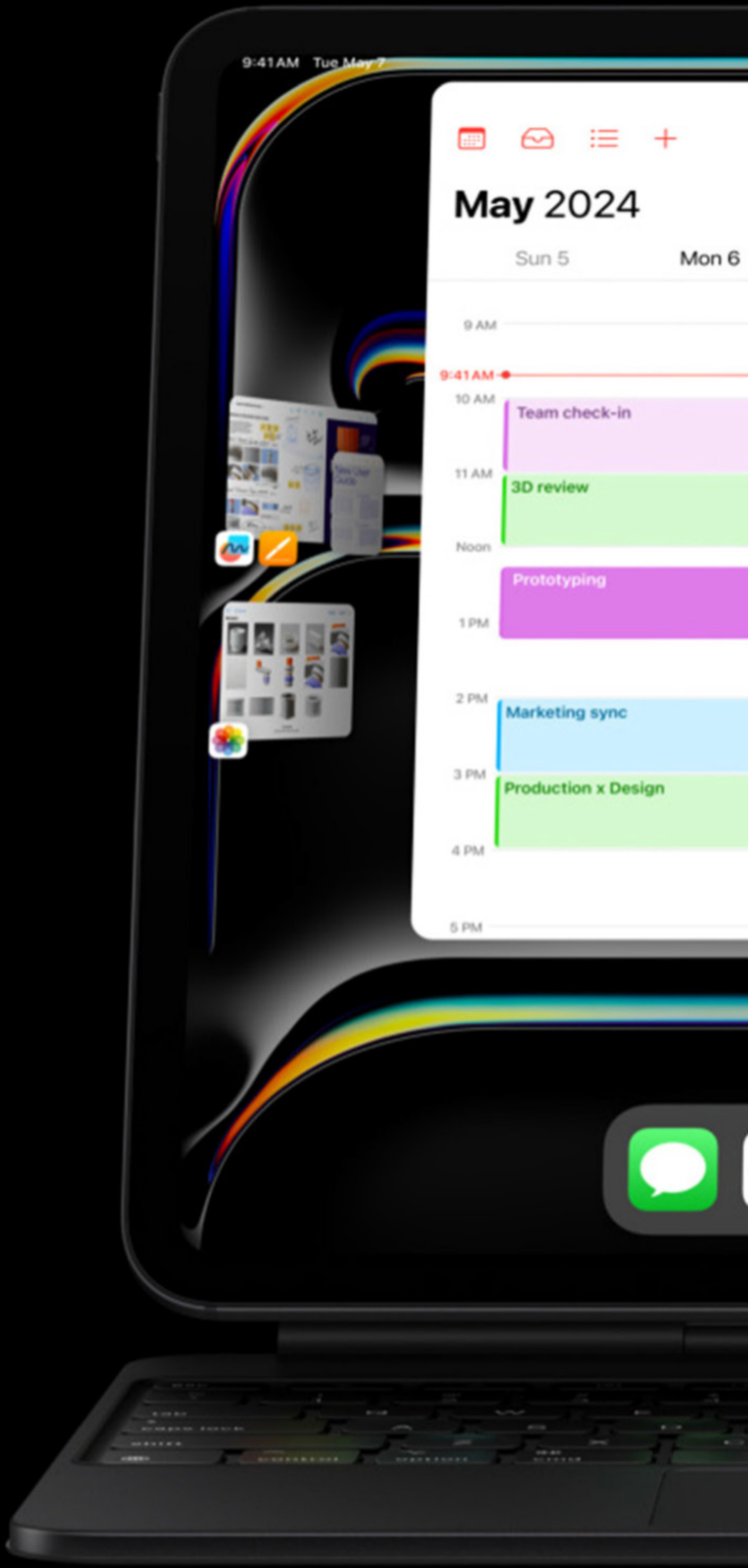
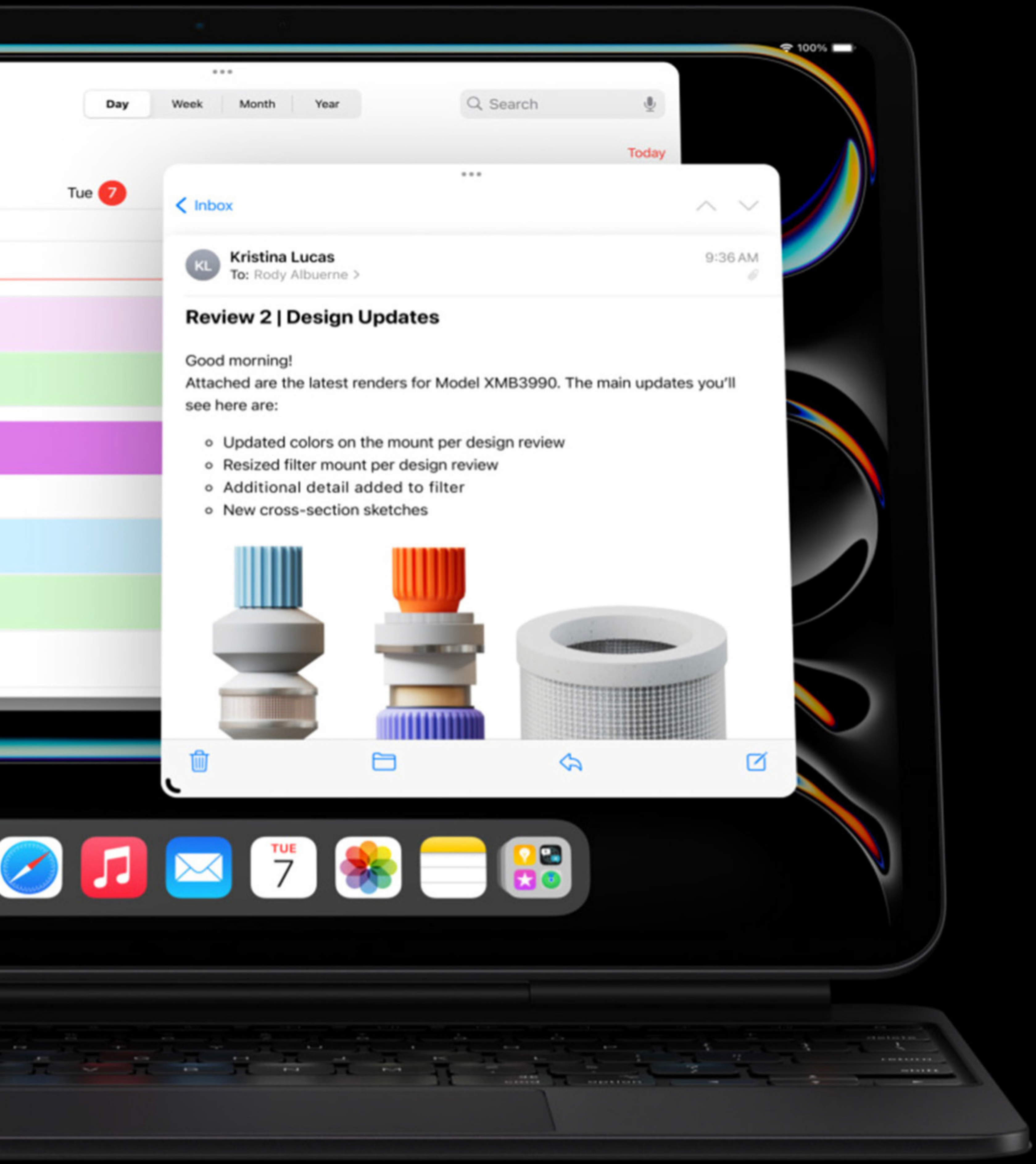
INNOVATIVE SOFTWARE

Although the hardware means the iPad and Mac have distinctive use cases, Apple's award-winning software brings them together. iCloud Drive ensures that your files are **accessible across all your Apple devices.** This is particularly useful for professionals who need to access documents, photos, and other files on both their Mac and iPad. Additionally, many apps, such as Microsoft Office, Adobe Creative Cloud, and Apple's iWork suite, are optimized for both macOS and iPadOS. This cross-platform compatibility ensures that your workflows are uninterrupted, regardless of your device. The integration of **Notes and Markup across the Mac and iPad** enhances productivity. You can create, edit, and view notes on both devices, syncing changes instantly via iCloud. The Apple Pencil makes it easy to annotate PDFs and other documents on your iPad, with these annotations accessible on your Mac. This is particularly beneficial for professionals who need to review and mark up documents on the go.

Siri and Spotlight provide cross-device functionality that further integrates the Mac and iPad. You can use Siri to set reminders, send messages, and perform other tasks on either device. Spotlight search lets you find files and information across your devices, ensuring you can quickly locate what you need, whether on your Mac or iPad. With the powerful capabilities of macOS and the portability of iPadOS, cross-platform software from third-party developers that enhances productivity and creativity is essential. The **Microsoft Office Suite,** which includes Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, is a staple for anyone needing robust office applications.

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Kristina Lucas
To: Rody Albuerne
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Review 2 | Design Updates

Good morning!
Attached are the latest renders for Model XMB3990. The main updates you'll see here are:

- Updated colors on the mount per design review
- Resized filter mount per design review
- Additional detail added to filter
- New cross-section sketches

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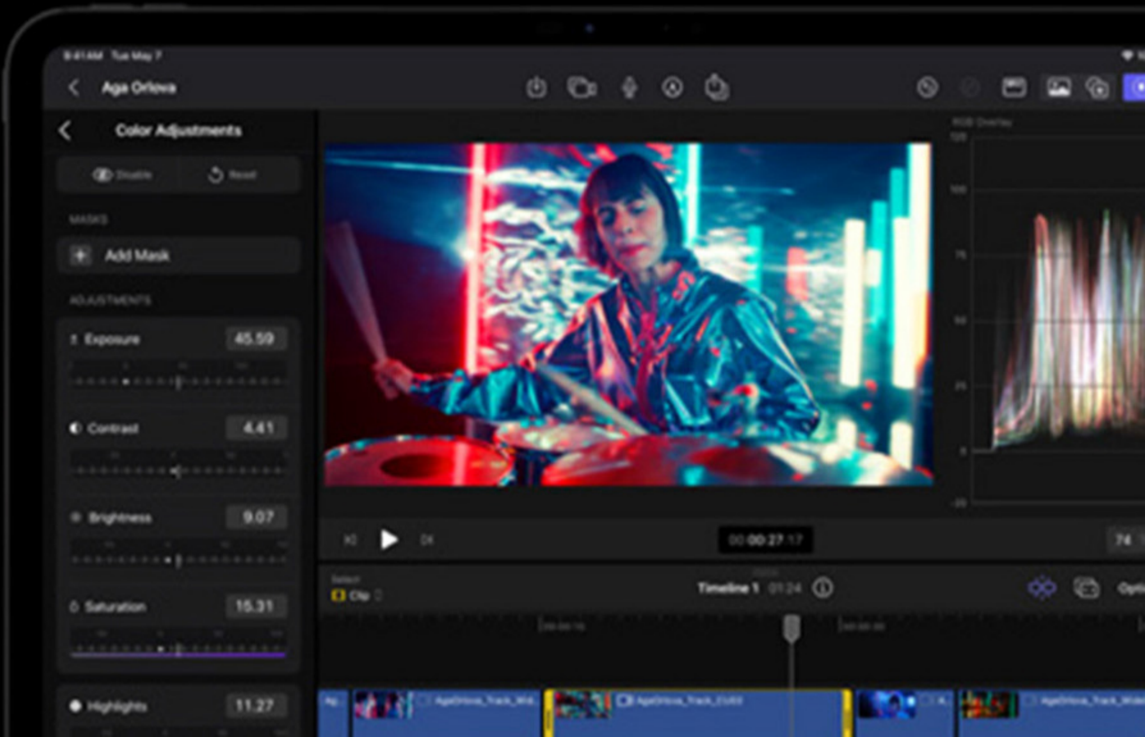
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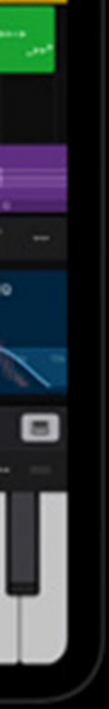

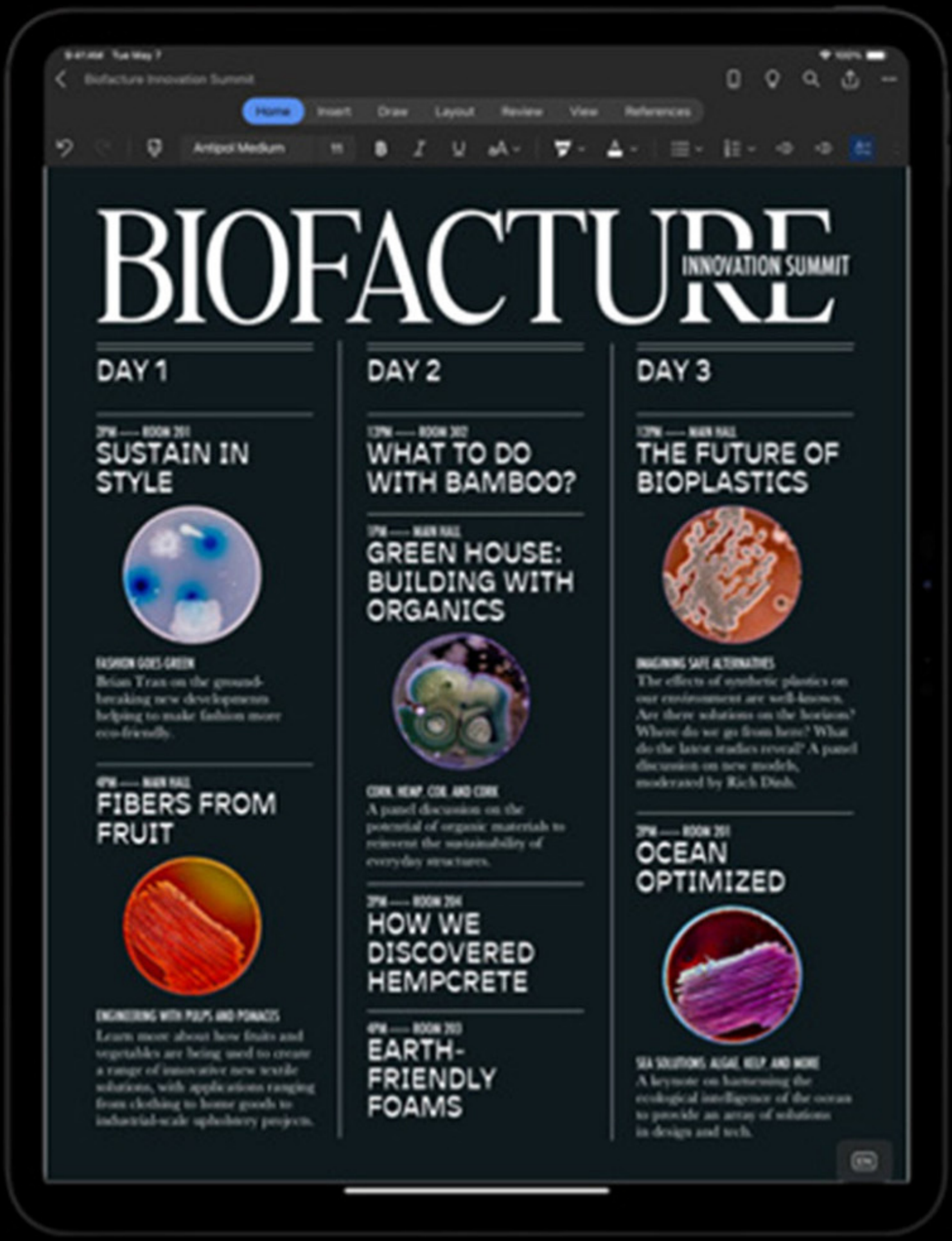
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BIOFACTURE
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DAY 1

2PM — ROOM 201
SUSTAIN IN STYLE

FASHION GOES GREEN
Brian Tran on the ground-breaking new developments helping to make fashion more eco-friendly.

4PM — MAIN HALL
FIBERS FROM FRUIT

ENGINEERING WITH PULPS AND POMACES
Learn more about how fruits and vegetables are being used to create a range of innovative new textile solutions, with applications ranging from clothing to home goods to industrial-scale upholstery projects.

DAY 2

12PM — ROOM 302
WHAT TO DO WITH BAMBOO?

1PM — MAIN HALL
GREEN HOUSE: BUILDING WITH ORGANICS

CORN, HEMP, COB, AND CORK
A panel discussion on the potential of organic materials to reinvent the sustainability of everyday structures.

3PM — ROOM 204
HOW WE DISCOVERED HEMPCRETE

4PM — ROOM 203
EARTH-FRIENDLY FOAMS

DAY 3

12PM — MAIN HALL
THE FUTURE OF BIOPLASTICS

IMAGINING SAFE ALTERNATIVES
The effects of synthetic plastics on our environment are well-known. Are there solutions on the horizon? Where do we go from here? What do the latest studies reveal? A panel discussion on new models, moderated by Rich Dinh.

3PM — ROOM 201
OCEAN OPTIMIZED

SEA SOLUTIONS, ALGAE, KELP, AND MORE
A keynote on harnessing the ecological intelligence of the ocean to provide an array of solutions in design and tech.

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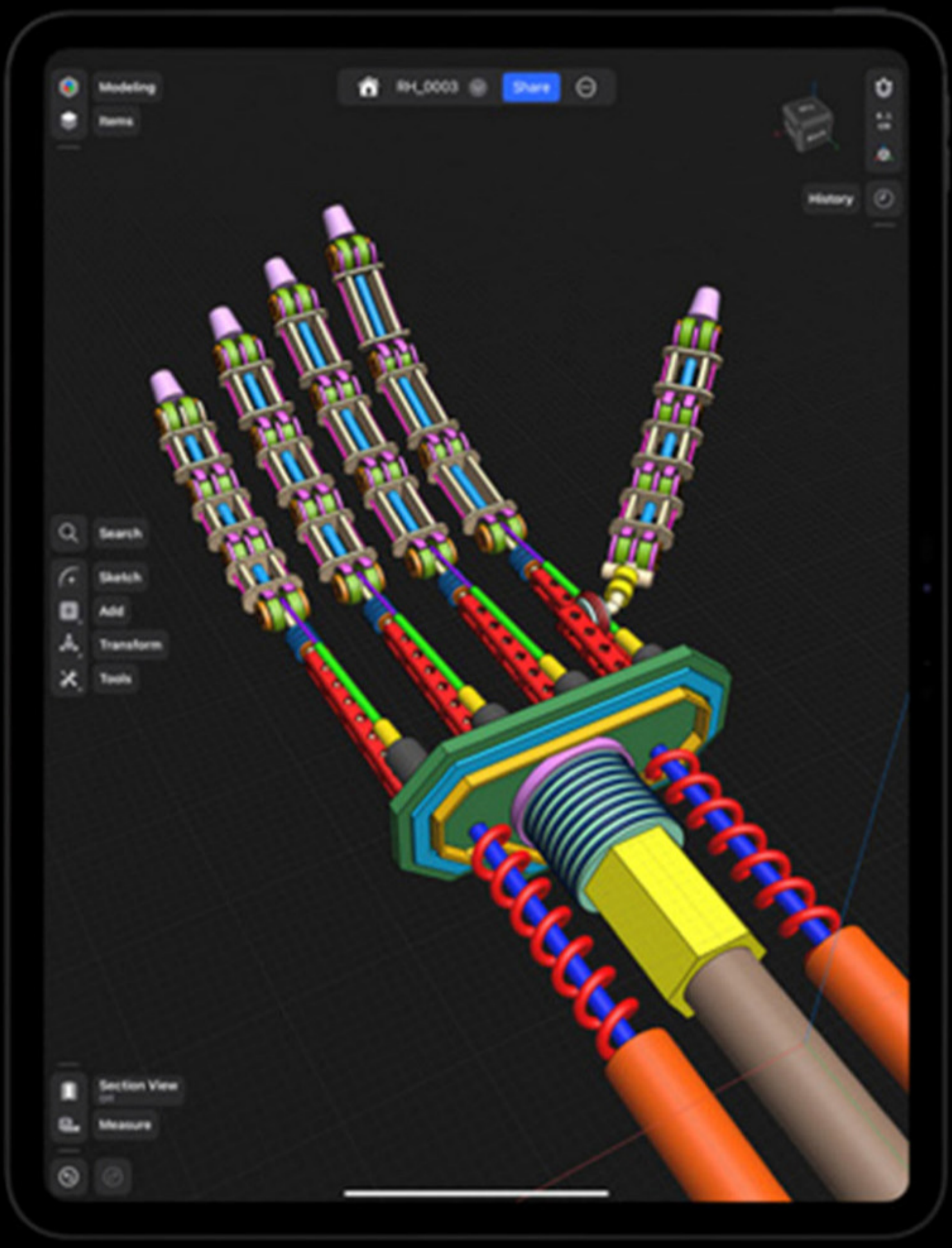
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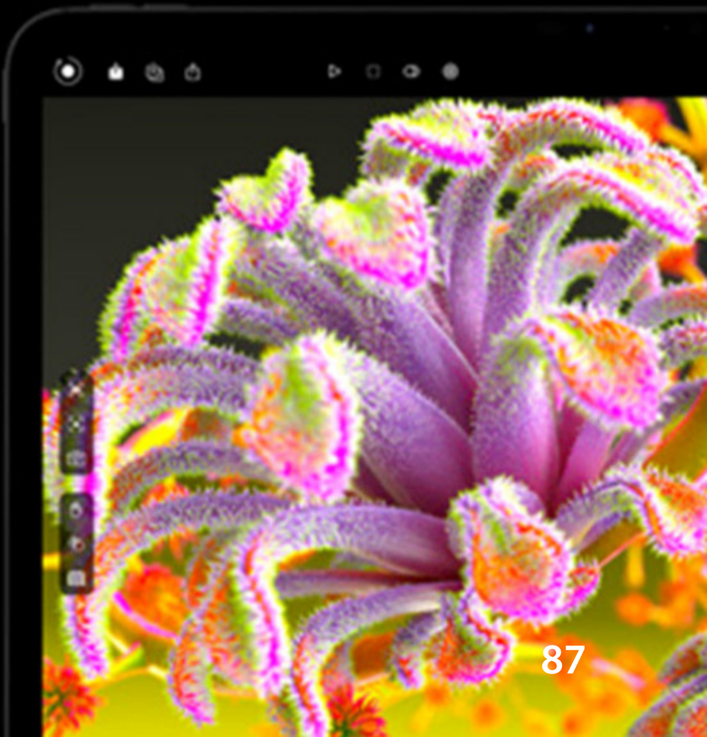

Available on both iPadOS and macOS, users can start a document on their Mac and continue editing on their iPad, with easy access to files via OneDrive. Notion is a versatile productivity tool **combining notes, databases, task management, and collaboration.** It allows for creating and organizing projects on a Mac and then accessing or editing them on an iPad, with real-time collaboration making it ideal for remote teams. For writers, Ulysses is a focused, distraction-free writing app that supports Markdown and iCloud syncing to keep manuscripts, blog posts, and other writing projects in sync across devices. Fantastical is a comprehensive calendar app . Its natural language input, beautiful interface, and powerful features like task management and event coordination make it a standout choice for scheduling. 1Password offers a secure way to manage passwords across devices. Available on both macOS and iPadOS, it ensures your passwords, credit card information, and other sensitive data are always at your fingertips, with features like biometric login and seamless synchronization. Finally, Bear is a flexible note-taking app supporting Markdown, with iCloud syncing to keep notes consistent across macOS and iPadOS. Its clean design and powerful tagging system make it a favorite among writers and organizers.

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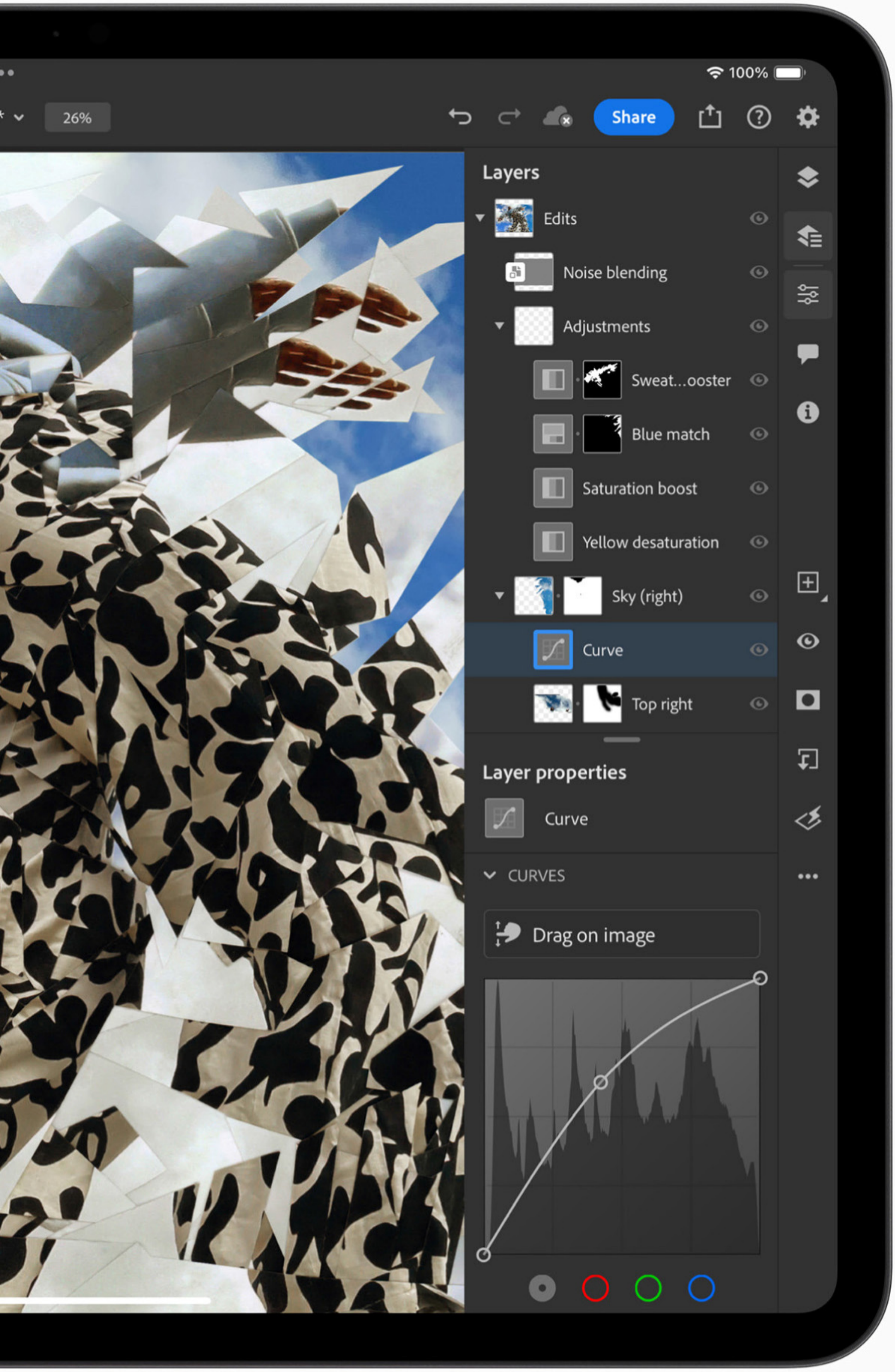
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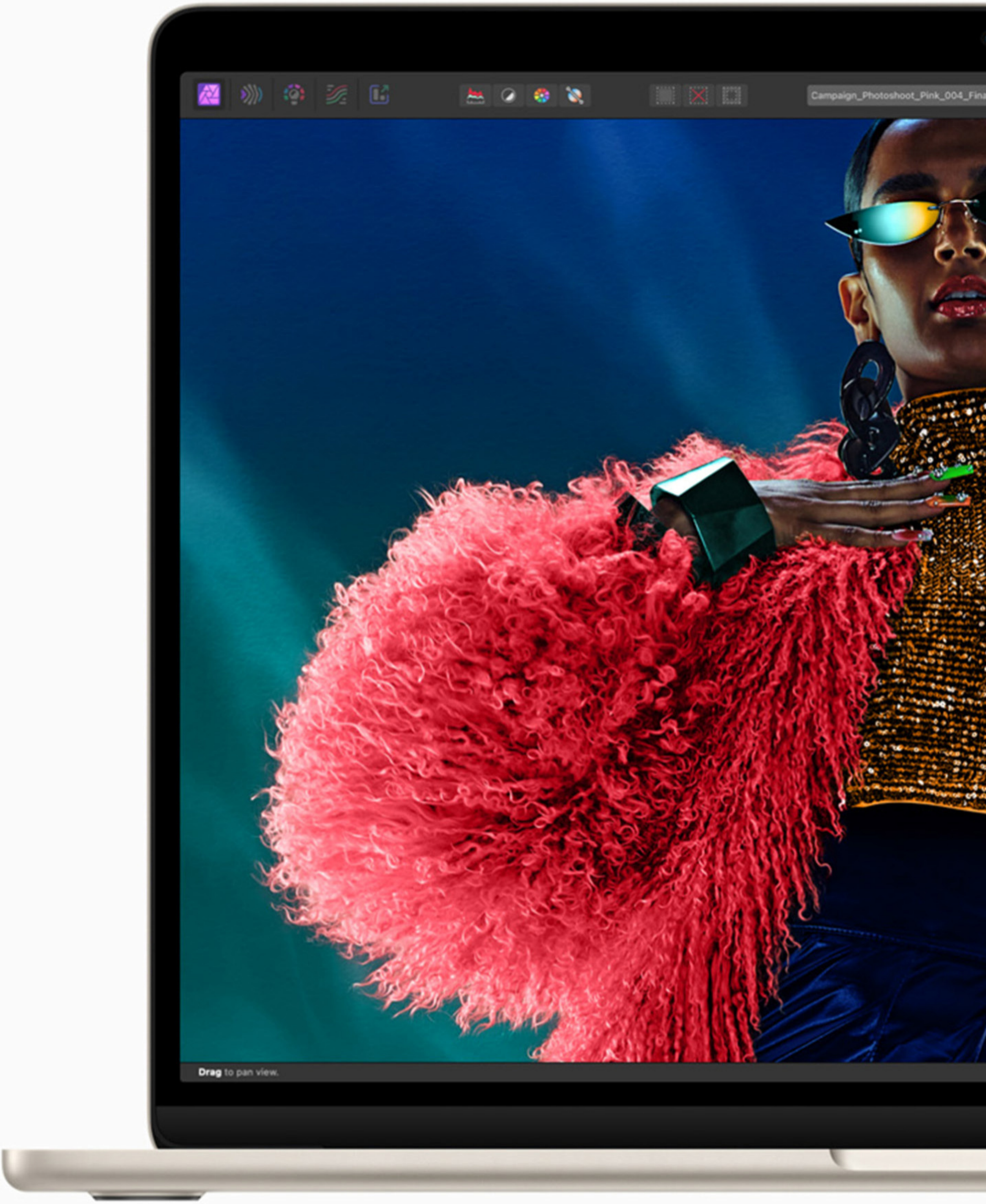
Apple’s Mac and iPad are designed to work together, offering a complementary and integrated experience. The iPad Pro’s advanced screens, including Pro Display XDR and TANDEM OLED technology, make it an exceptional external monitor for the Mac. Features like Sidecar, Universal Control, Handoff, and shared apps ensure these devices enhance each other’s strengths, providing users with a versatile and powerful computing environment that prioritizes productivity and usability.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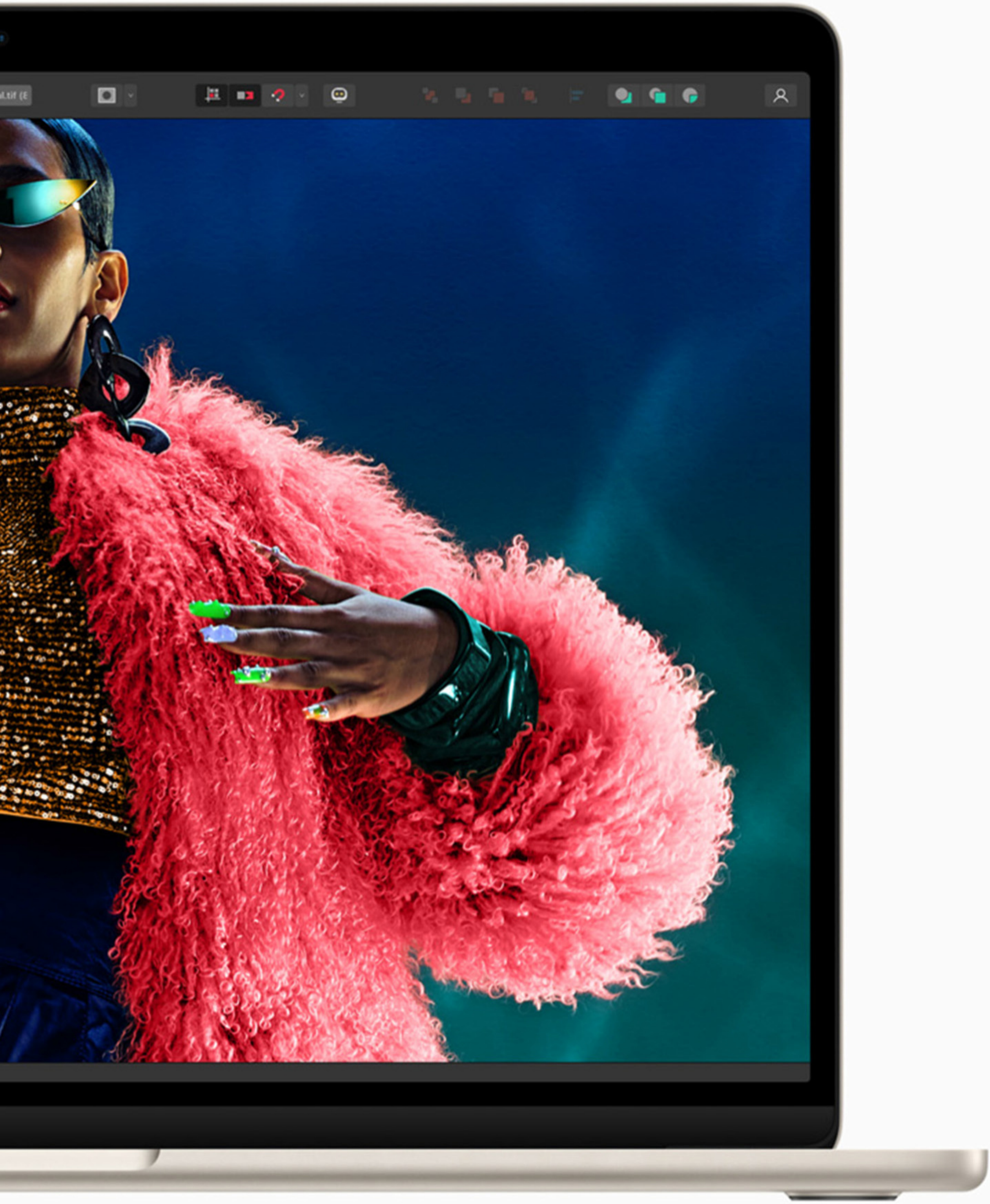
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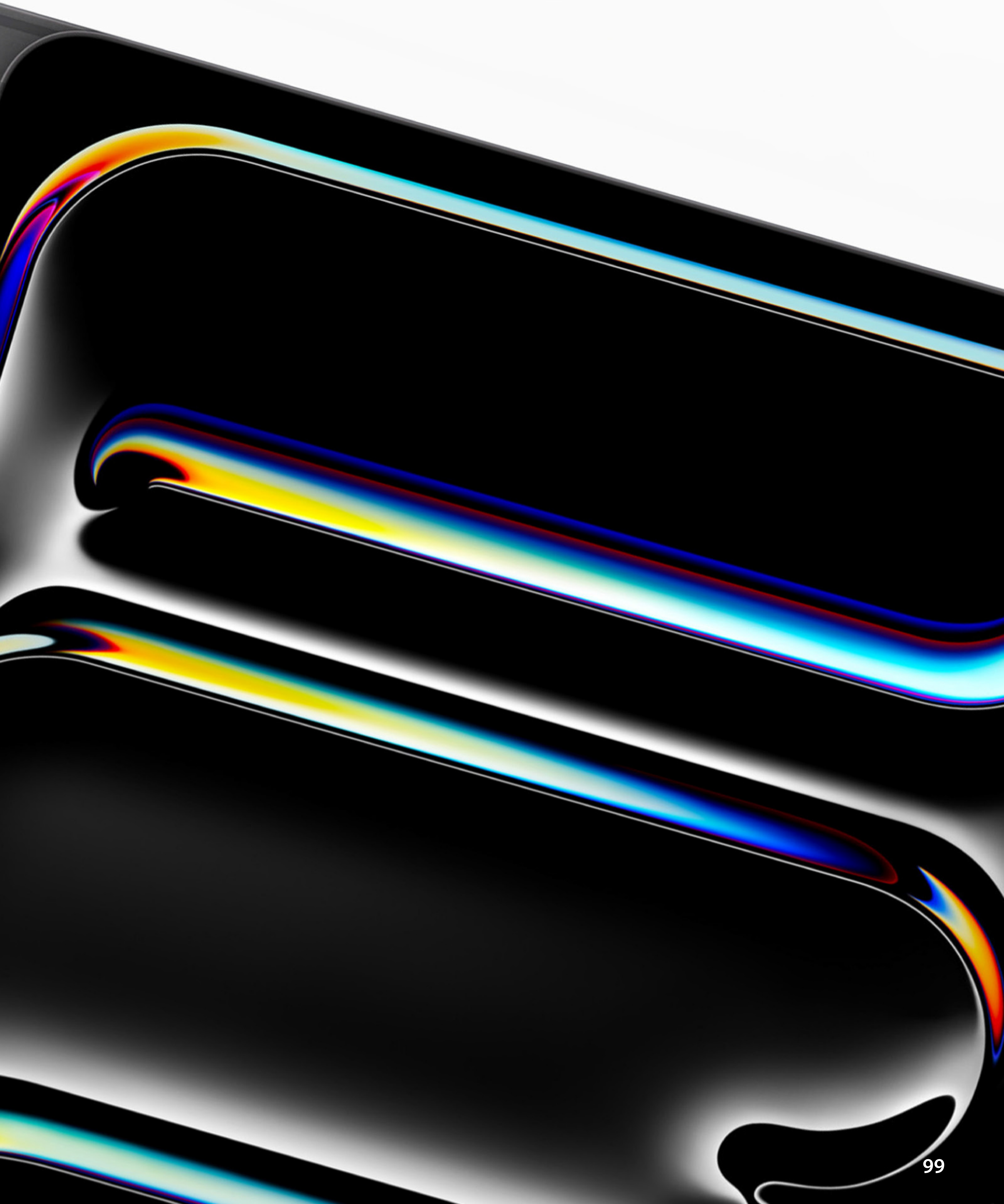

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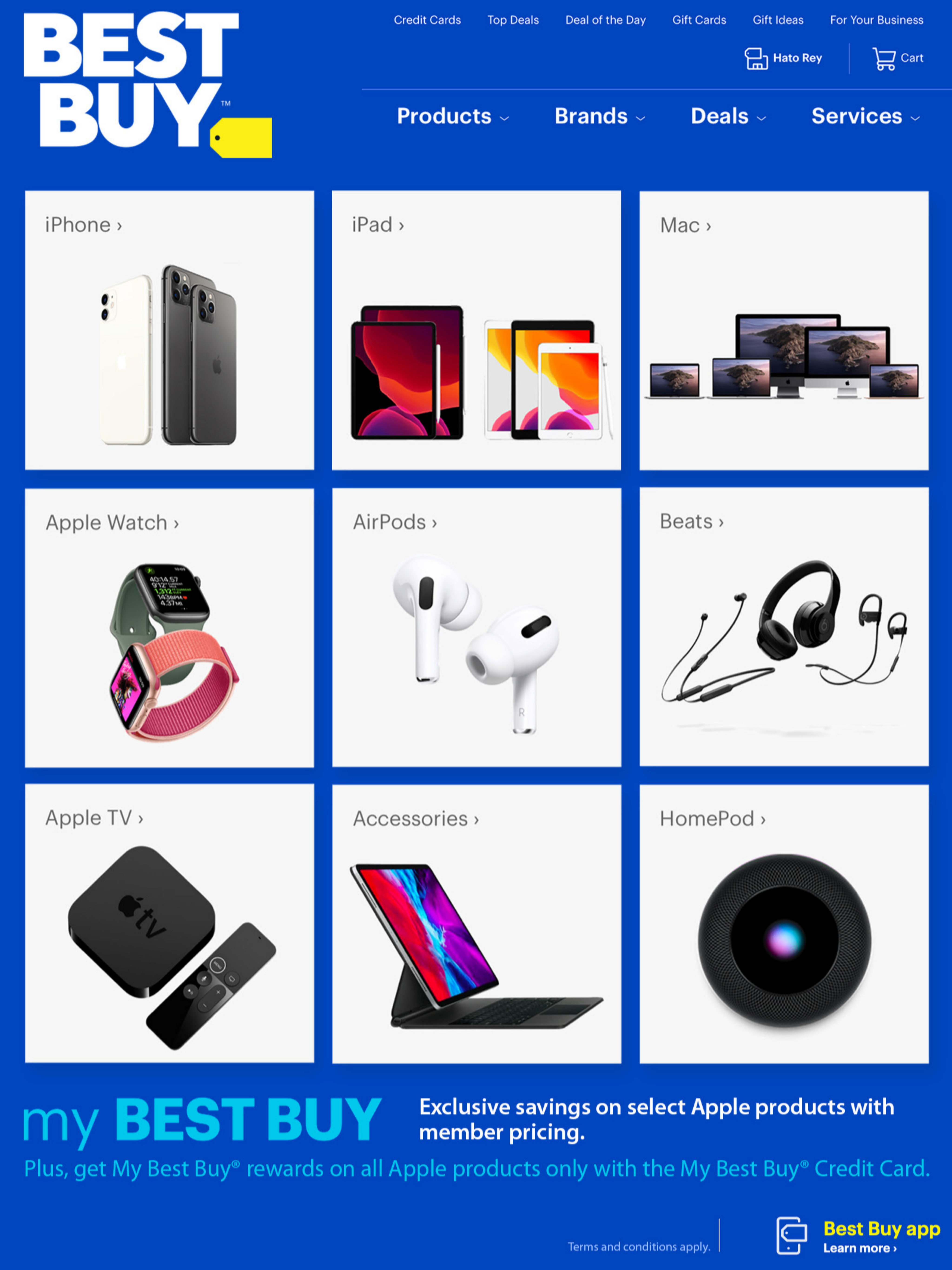
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CYBERSECURITY LABELING FOR SMART DEVICES AIMS TO HELP PEOPLE CHOOSE ITEMS LESS LIKELY TO BE HACKED

Consumer labels designed to help Americans pick smart devices that are less vulnerable to hacking could begin appearing on products before the holiday shopping season, federal officials said this week.

Under the new U.S. Cyber Trust Mark Initiative, manufacturers can affix the label on their products if they meet federal cybersecurity standards. The types of devices eligible for labels

include baby monitors, home security cameras, fitness trackers, refrigerators and other internet-connected appliances.

The White House first announced the "Cyber Trust" labels last year and the Federal Communications Commission finalized the details in March, clearing the way for the labels to start showing up in several months.

"You should hopefully, by the holiday season, start to see devices that have this trustmark on it," said Nicholas Leiserson, the assistant national cyber director for cyber policy and programs. Leiserson made his comments during a cybersecurity panel at Auburn University's McCrary Institute in Washington.

The labels will also include QR codes that consumers can scan for security information about their devices.

Officials have likened the labels to the Energy Star program, which rates appliances' energy efficiency, and say the idea is to empower consumers while also encouraging manufacturers to enhance their cybersecurity.

Amazon, Best Buy, Google, LG Electronics USA, Logitech and Samsung are among industry participants.

The proliferation of so-called smart devices has coincided with growing cybercrime in which one insecure device can often give cyberintruders a dangerous foothold on a home network.

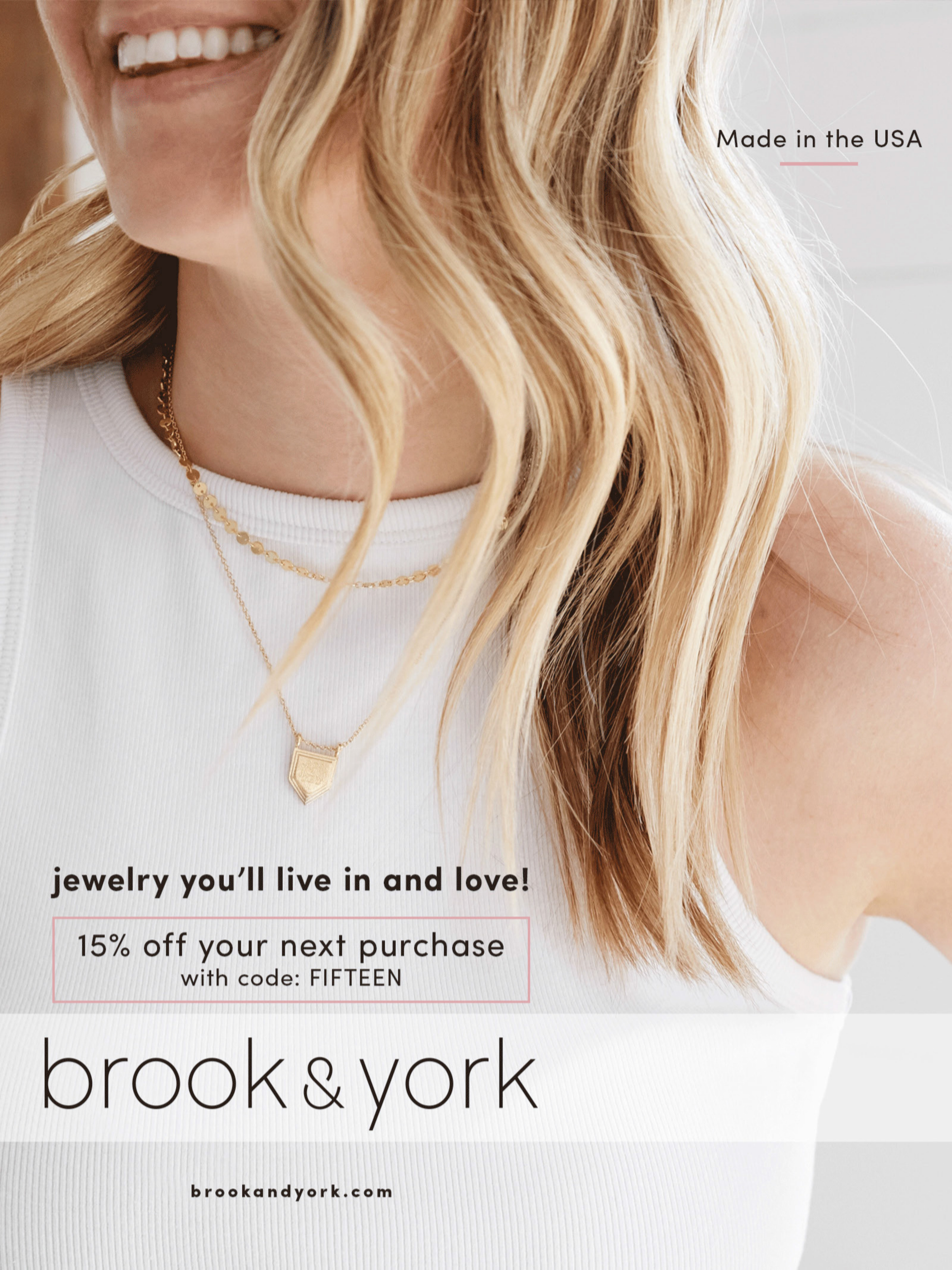

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Image: Benoit Tessier

USING AI, MASTERCARD EXPECTS TO FIND COMPROMISED CARDS QUICKER, BEFORE THEY GET USED BY CRIMINALS

mastercard

Mastercard said this week that it expects to be able to discover that your credit or debit card number has been compromised well before it ends up in the hands of a cybercriminal.

In its latest software update rolling out, Mastercard is integrating artificial intelligence into its fraud-prediction technology that it expects will be able to see patterns in stolen cards faster and allow banks to replace them before they are used by criminals.

“Generative AI is going to allow to figure out where did you perhaps get your credentials compromised, how do we identify how it possibly happened, and how do we very quickly remedy that situation not only for you, but the other customers who don’t know they are compromised yet,” said Johan Gerber, executive vice president of security and cyber innovation at Mastercard, in an interview.

Mastercard, which is based in Purchase, New York, says with this new update it can use other patterns or contextual information, such as geography, time and addresses, and combine it with incomplete but compromised credit card numbers that appear in databases to get to the cardholders sooner to replace the bad card.

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The patterns can now also be used in reverse, potentially using batches of bad cards to see potentially compromised merchants or payment processors. The pattern recognition goes beyond what humans could do through database inquiries or other standard methods, Gerber said.

Billions of stolen credit card and debit card numbers are floating in the dark web, available for purchase by any criminal. Most were stolen from merchants in data breaches over the years, but also a significant number have been stolen from unsuspecting consumers who used their credit or debit cards at the wrong gas station, ATM or online merchant.

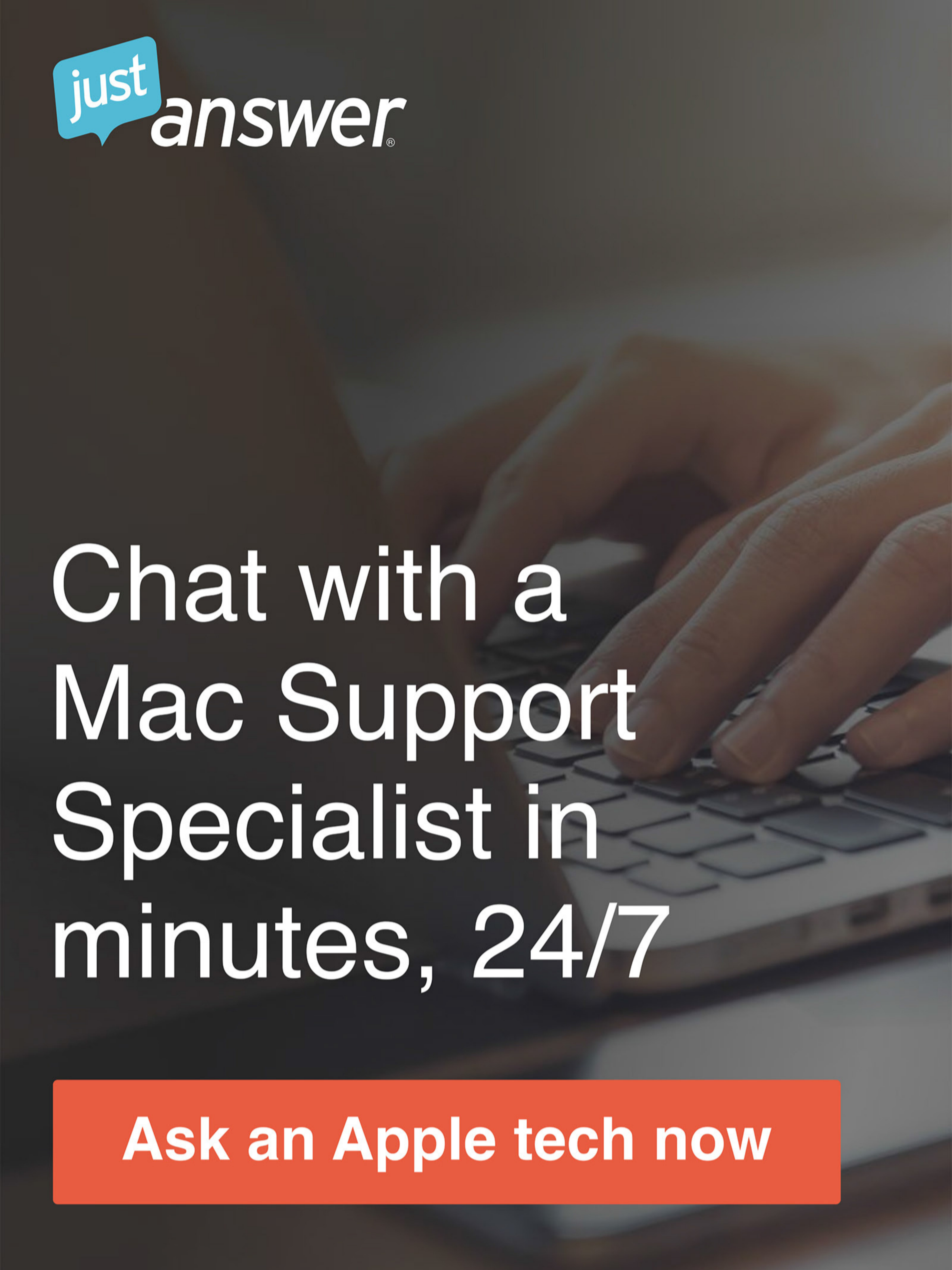
These compromised cards can remain undetected for weeks, months or even years. It is only when the payment networks themselves dive into the dark web to fish for stolen numbers themselves, a merchant learns about a breach, or the card gets used by a criminal do the payments networks and banks figure out a batch of cards might be compromised.

“We can now actually proactively reach out to the banks to make sure that we service that consumer and get them a new card in her or his hands so they can go about their lives with as little disruption as possible,” Gerber said.

The payment networks are largely trying to move away from the “static” credit card or debit card numbers — that is a card number and expiration date that is used universally across all merchants — and move to unique numbers for specific transactions. But it may take years for that transition to happen, particularly in the U.S. where payment technology adoption tends to lag.

While more than 90% of all in-person transactions worldwide are now using chip cards, the figure in the U.S. is closer to 70%, according to EMVCo, the technological organization behind the chip in credit and debit cards.

Mastercard’s update comes as its major competitor, Visa Inc., also looks for ways to make consumers discard the 16-digit credit and debit card number. Visa last week announced major changes to how credit and debit cards will operate in the U.S., meaning Americans will be carrying fewer physical cards in their wallets, and the 16-digit credit or debit card number printed on every card will become increasingly irrelevant.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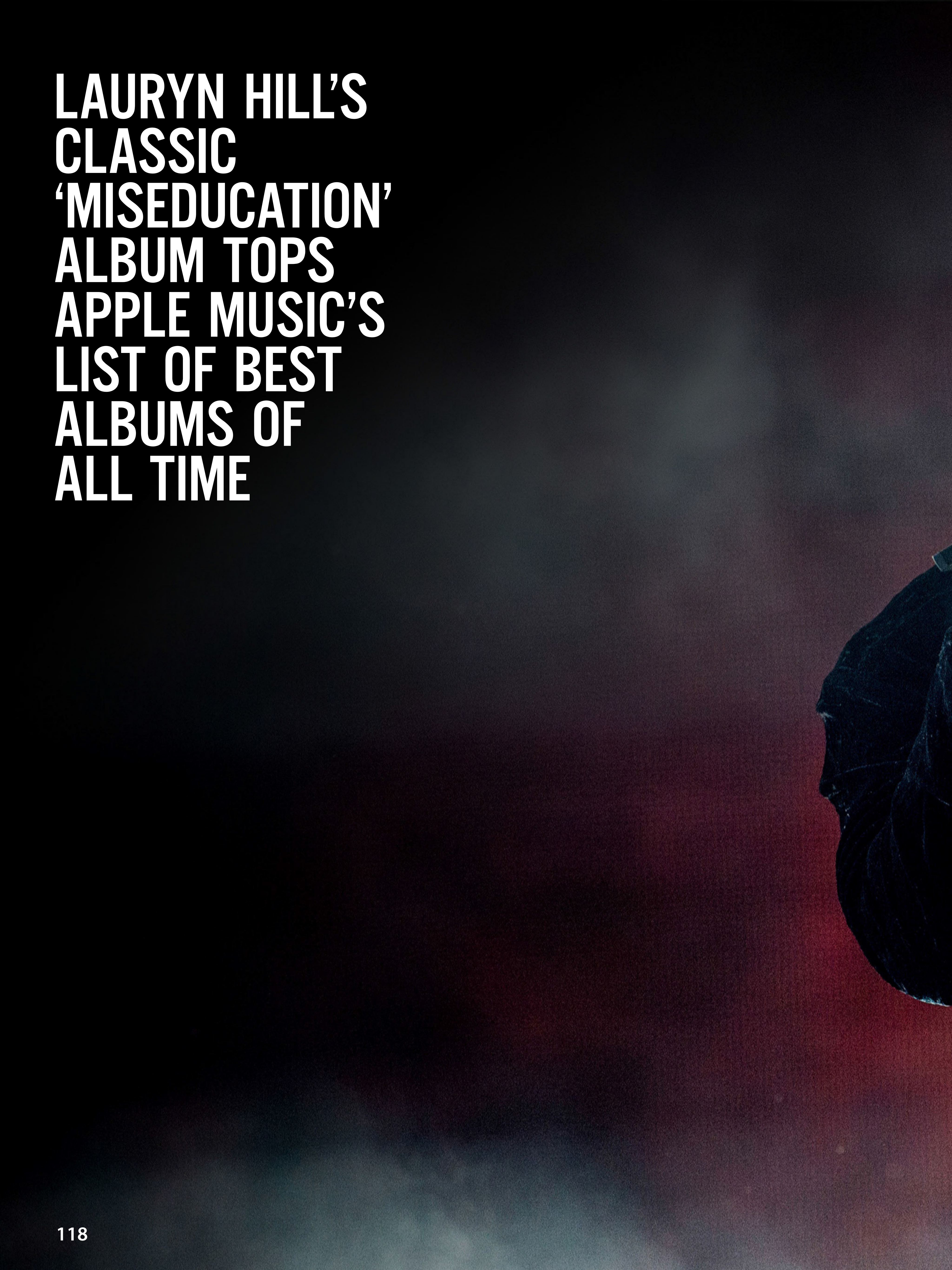
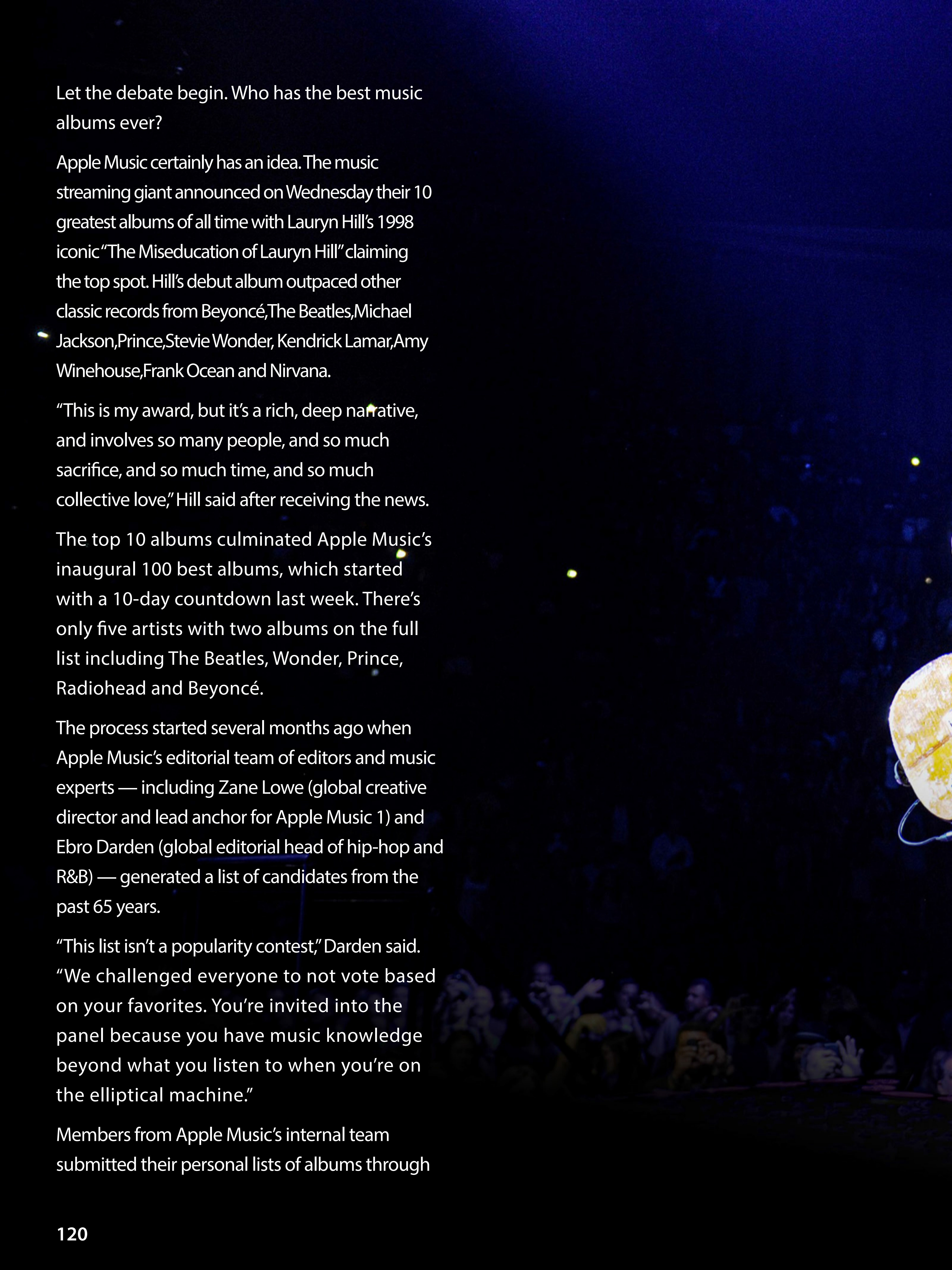
LAURYN HILL'S CLASSIC 'MISEDUCATION' ALBUM TOPS APPLE MUSIC'S LIST OF BEST ALBUMS OF ALL TIME





Let the debate begin. Who has the best music albums ever?

Apple Music certainly has an idea. The music streaming giant announced on Wednesday their 10 greatest albums of all time with Lauryn Hill's 1998 iconic "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" claiming the top spot. Hill's debut album outpaced other classic records from Beyoncé, The Beatles, Michael Jackson, Prince, Stevie Wonder, Kendrick Lamar, Amy Winehouse, Frank Ocean and Nirvana.

"This is my award, but it's a rich, deep narrative, and involves so many people, and so much sacrifice, and so much time, and so much collective love," Hill said after receiving the news.

The top 10 albums culminated Apple Music's inaugural 100 best albums, which started with a 10-day countdown last week. There's only five artists with two albums on the full list including The Beatles, Wonder, Prince, Radiohead and Beyoncé.

The process started several months ago when Apple Music's editorial team of editors and music experts — including Zane Lowe (global creative director and lead anchor for Apple Music 1) and Ebro Darden (global editorial head of hip-hop and R&B) — generated a list of candidates from the past 65 years.

"This list isn't a popularity contest," Darden said. "We challenged everyone to not vote based on your favorites. You're invited into the panel because you have music knowledge beyond what you listen to when you're on the elliptical machine."

Members from Apple Music's internal team submitted their personal lists of albums through

the company's voting microsite. The votes were weighted according to an album's placement — the higher the ranking, the more votes assigned.

Apple Music used the same voting methodology for a select group external voters that included artists, songwriters, producers and some media.

And now, we're here. With commentary from Lowe and Darden, here is Apple Music's top 10 best albums list:

1. LAURYN HILL, "THE MISEDUCATION OF LAURYN HILL" (1998)

DARDEN: We're really leaning on what she did on this album. The songwriting, what she shared, what was happening in her life that she effectively put in the music. The fact that she just became a mother. All the R&B vibes. The Roberta Flack and Donny Hathaway along with D'Angelo's "Nothing Even Matters." The social commentary in "Doo Wop (That Thing)." It's hip-hop. It's R&B. It's got a dancehall element. It's a powerful woman being independent and being like "Yo, I got something to say." And oh by the way, the son she's singing about on the album is Bob Marley's grandson.... It checks so many boxes.

2. MICHAEL JACKSON, "THRILLER" (1982)

LOWE: It's the greatest blockbuster album ever. I think everyone I've spoken to about this list automatically assumes that it's going to be No. 1. That's because we've spent decade after decade seeing it basically No. 1. It came out during a time period when music was the top entertainment in the world. People were desperate for this Michael Jackson record even more than going to see a movie. "Thriller" is an incredible record. The whole

thing is dialed in. But it didn’t bug me that Lauryn came in at No. 1 and “Thriller” landed at No. 2.

3. THE BEATLES, “ABBEY ROAD” (1969)

DARDEN: “Abbey Road” has taken on a more modern life of its own in the social media space with TikTok. Maybe that’s why it landed so high. When you go song for song on “Abbey Road,” I think it musically represents a happy time for the Beatles. It’s very much like more raw Beatles than pop Beatles.

4. PRINCE AND THE REVOLUTION, “PURPLE RAIN” (1984)

DARDEN: I love that it was a Black artist making soulful rock and pop records. I loved the movie. It’s phenomenal memories. It’s not my favorite Prince album. I’m more into “Sign O’ The Times.” Dance, music, sex romance. I’m a big Prince fan, so I’m happy this got the votes. I think “Purple Rain” lives on in (iconic fashion).

5. FRANK OCEAN, “BLOND” (2016)

LOWE: I had this higher than five. I simply adore this album. I feel like Frank is like Prince. He is like Michael. He is like Lauryn. He is like Marvin (Gaye). He is like Radiohead. He is the great outliers who found a way into our hearts on a massive scale. They do not make music to appeal to a large audience, and yet somehow the music they make reaches us. “Blond” didn’t hit the certain sales targets that some of the biggest

Daddy's
Girl

albums on this list did... But every time I put it on, it moves me different every single time.

6. STEVIE WONDER, “SONGS IN THE KEY OF LIFE” (1976)

LOWE: It starts with a message, and it ends with a time to process everything that’s happened in between. In the end, he finally gives you a moment to just take everything you’ve listened to and just absorb it. He channeled something major.

7. KENDRICK LAMAR, “GOOD KID, M.A.A.D CITY” (2012)

DARDEN: I’m happy this went so high. It was his debut album. He wrote an audio movie about his neighborhood and basically being a reluctant kid who is surrounded by all this toxicity, mayhem and chaos. He’s trying to see his way through it. He created opportunities for him and his friends to survive.

8. AMY WINEHOUSE, “BACK TO BLACK” (2006)

LOWE: It talks about heartbreak, rejection, unrequited love and the pain you go through when you have feelings for someone who doesn’t have the same feelings back. You don’t know what to do with that emotion. It’s very human. If we all live long enough, we’re going to go through real heartbreak in our life. This album took that experience and made us sing and dance and move. It’s one of the most tasteful albums about heartache ever recorded. It’s an incredible magic act.

Cécred

PIRATES

9. NIRVANA, “NEVERMIND” (1991)

LOWE: This was a combination of real skill, beautiful instinct, total courage and vulnerability. It showed the ability to dial into what (Kurt Cobain) was feeling and dress it up in a way that made people want to dance, jump, sing and scream. But if you really listen, which tens of millions of people did, it was deeper than that. And we understood it. This album was the start of me being able to sit down and have a conversation about anxiety and depression with my mom, my brother and friends. If he could write about it, why can’t I talk about it?

10. BEYONCÉ, “LEMONADE” (2016)

DARDEN: This was the first time we got to see Beyoncé’s personal life. Her sister just beat up her husband on an elevator, and everybody’s in their business now... I like “Lemonade” but it’s not my favorite Beyoncé album. “Renaissance” is one my favorite Beyoncé albums ever. But if you lived in that “Lemonade” moment, it was a big deal.

AVERAGE US VEHICLE AGE HITS RECORD 12.6 YEARS AS HIGH PRICES FORCE PEOPLE TO KEEP THEM LONGER

Regular Cash
Regular Credit
Premium Cash
Premium Credit
EMERGENCY VEHICLES ONLY
E-ZPass ACCEPTED ALL LANES
ONE WAY
ERIE STREET
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S&P

Cars, trucks and SUVs in the U.S. keep getting older, hitting a record average age of 12.6 years in 2024 as people hang on to their vehicles largely because new ones cost so much.

S&P Global Mobility, which tracks state vehicle registration data nationwide, said Wednesday that the average vehicle age grew about two months from last year's record.

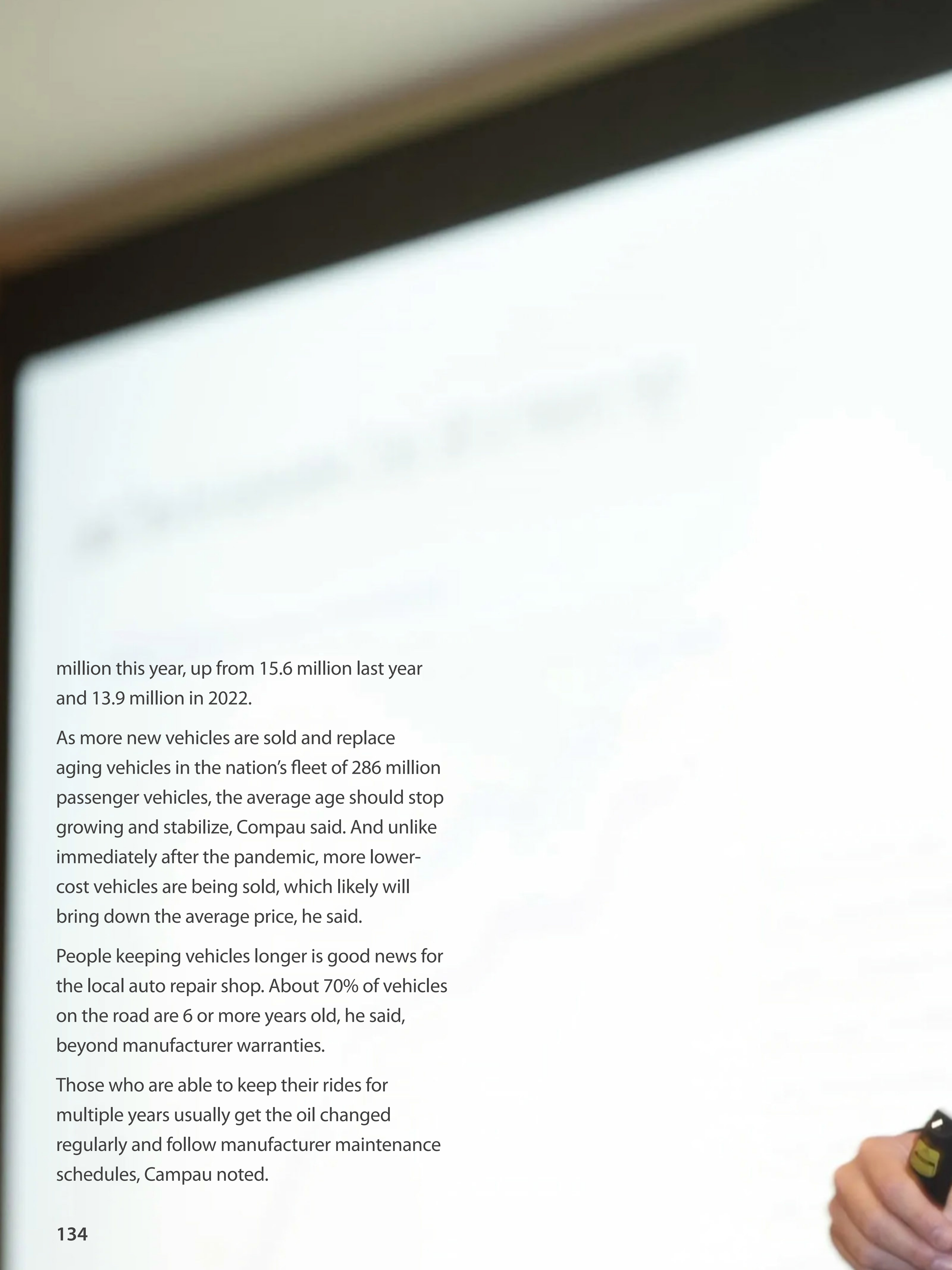
But the growth in average age is starting to slow as new vehicle sales start to recover from pandemic-related shortages of parts, including computer chips. The average increased by three months in 2023.

Still, with an average U.S. new-vehicle selling price of just over $45,000 last month, many can't afford to buy new — even though prices are down more than $2,000 from the peak in December of 2022, according to J.D. Power.

"It's prohibitively high for a lot of households now," said Todd Campau, aftermarket leader for S&P Global Mobility. "So I think consumers are being painted into the corner of having to keep the vehicle on the road longer."

Other factors include people waiting to see if they want to buy an electric vehicle or go with a gas-electric hybrid or a gasoline vehicle. Many, he said, are worried about the charging network being built up so they can travel without worrying about running out of battery power. Also, he said, vehicles are made better these days and simply are lasting a long time.

New vehicle sales in the U.S. are starting to return to pre-pandemic levels, with prices and interest rates the big influencing factors rather than illness and supply-chain problems, Compau said. He said he expects sales to hit around 16



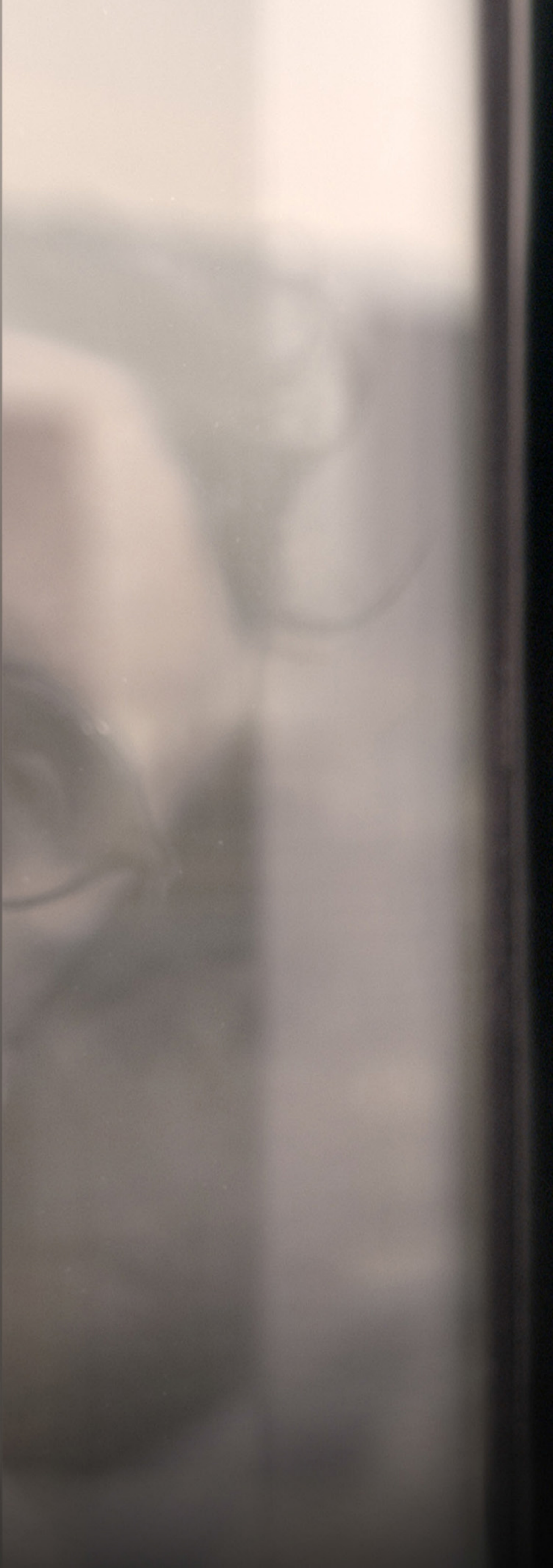
million this year, up from 15.6 million last year and 13.9 million in 2022.

As more new vehicles are sold and replace aging vehicles in the nation's fleet of 286 million passenger vehicles, the average age should stop growing and stabilize, Compau said. And unlike immediately after the pandemic, more lower-cost vehicles are being sold, which likely will bring down the average price, he said.

People keeping vehicles longer is good news for the local auto repair shop. About 70% of vehicles on the road are 6 or more years old, he said, beyond manufacturer warranties.

Those who are able to keep their rides for multiple years usually get the oil changed regularly and follow manufacturer maintenance schedules, Campau noted.

IS THAT 'HER'? OPENAI PAUSES A CHATGPT VOICE AFTER SOME SAY IT SOUNDS LIKE SCARLETT JOHANSSON



OpenAI says it plans to halt the use of one of its ChatGPT voices after some users said it sounded like Scarlett Johansson, who famously voiced a fictional, and at the time futuristic, AI assistant in the 2013 film "Her."

In a post on the social media platform X Monday, OpenAI said it is "working to pause" Sky — the name of one of five voices that ChatGPT users can chose to speak with. The company said it had "heard questions" about how it selects the lifelike audio options available for its flagship artificial intelligence chatbot, particularly Sky, and wanted to address them.

OpenAI was also quick to debunk the internet's theories about Johansson in an accompanying blog post detailing how ChatGPT's voices were chosen.

"We believe that AI voices should not deliberately mimic a celebrity's distinctive voice — Sky's voice is not an imitation of Scarlett Johansson but belongs to a different professional actress using her own natural speaking voice," the company wrote. It said it could not share the name of its voice actors for privacy reasons.

San Francisco-based OpenAI did not comment further on why it still decided to pause Sky's use.

OpenAI first rolled out voice capabilities for ChatGPT, which included the five different voices, in September, allowing users to engage in back-to-forth conversation with the AI assistant. "Voice Mode" was originally just available to paid subscribers, but in November, OpenAI announced that the feature would become free for all users with the mobile app.

And ChatGPT's interactions are becoming more and more sophisticated. Last week, OpenAI said the latest update to its generative AI model can mimic human cadences in its verbal responses and can even try to detect people's moods.

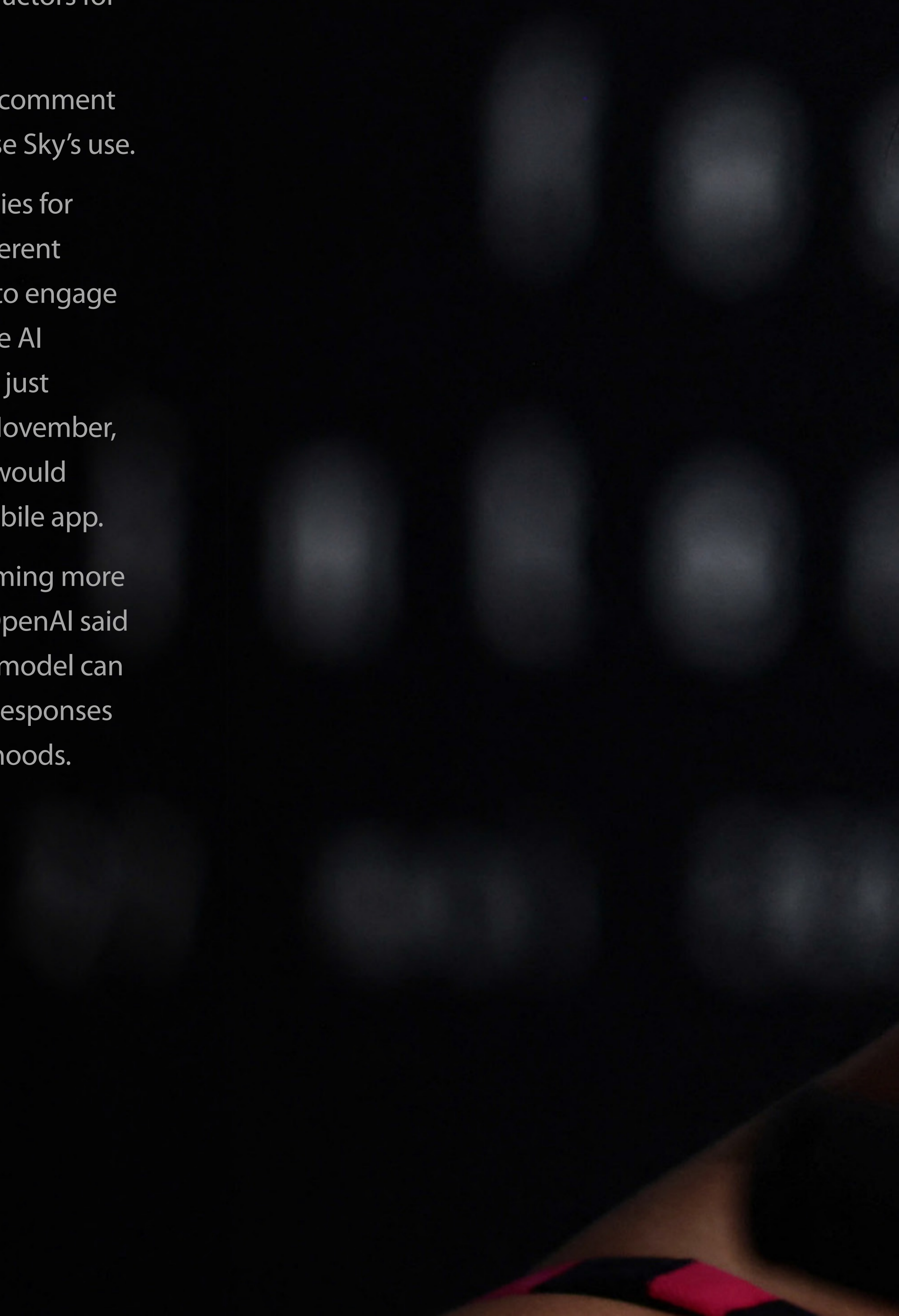


Image: Yara Nardi

OpenAI says the newest model, dubbed GPT-4o, works faster than previous versions and can reason across text, audio and video in real time. In a demonstration during OpenAI's May 13 announcement, the AI bot chatted in real time, adding emotion — specifically "more drama" — to its voice as requested. It also took a stab at extrapolating a person's emotional state by looking at a selfie video of their face, aided in language translations, step-by-step math problems and more.

GPT-4o, short for "omni," isn't widely available yet. It will progressively make its way to select users in the coming weeks and months. The model's text and image capabilities have already begun rolling out, and is set to reach even some of those that use ChatGPT's free tier — but the new voice mode will just be available for paid subscribers of ChatGPT Plus.

While most have yet to get their hands on these newly announced features, the capabilities have conjured up even more comparisons to the Spike Jonze's dystopian romance "Her," which follows an introverted man (Joaquin Phoenix) who falls in love with an AI-operating system (Johansson), leading to many complications.

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman appeared to tap into this, too — simply posting the word "her" on the social media platform X the day of GPT-4o's unveiling.

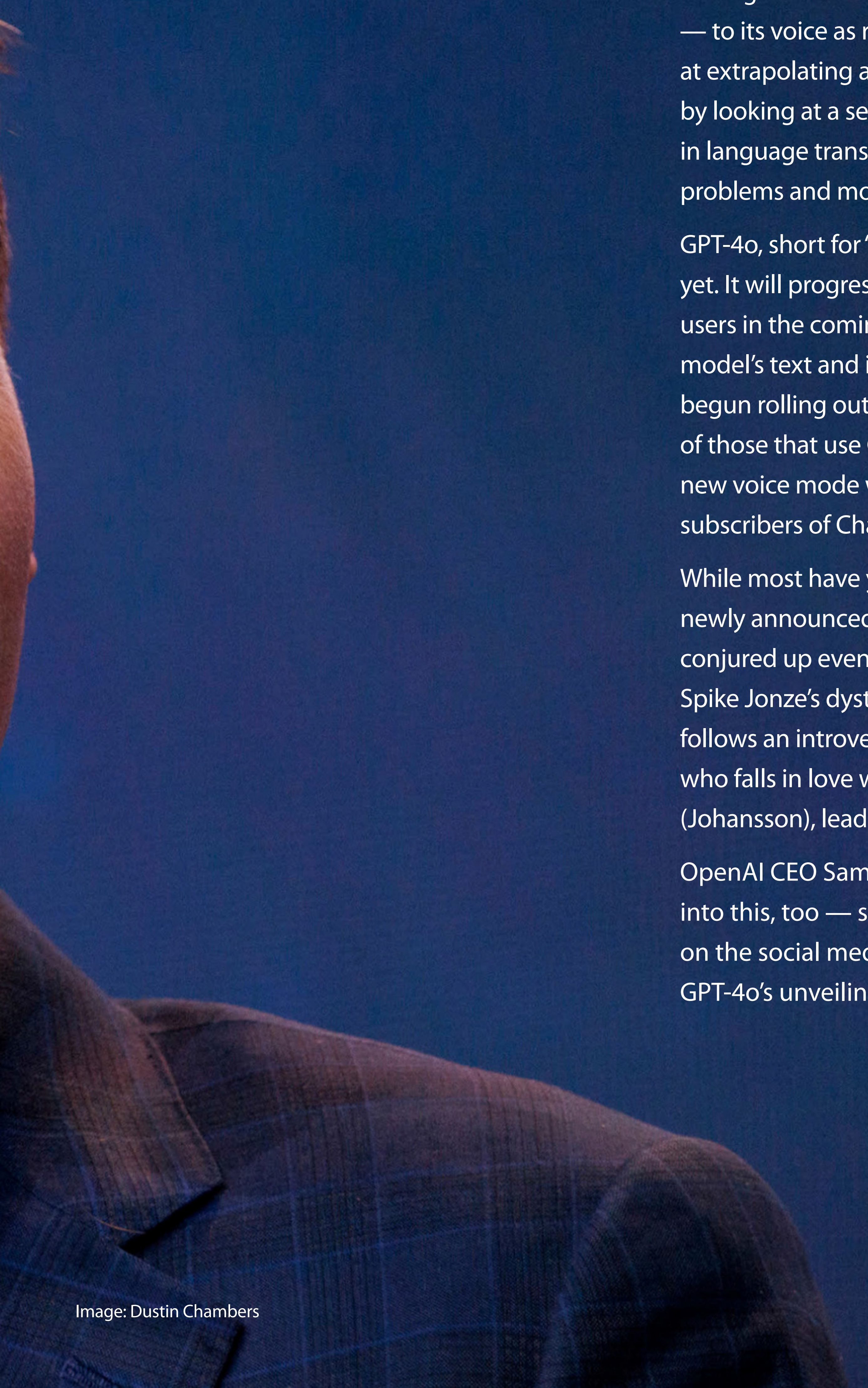
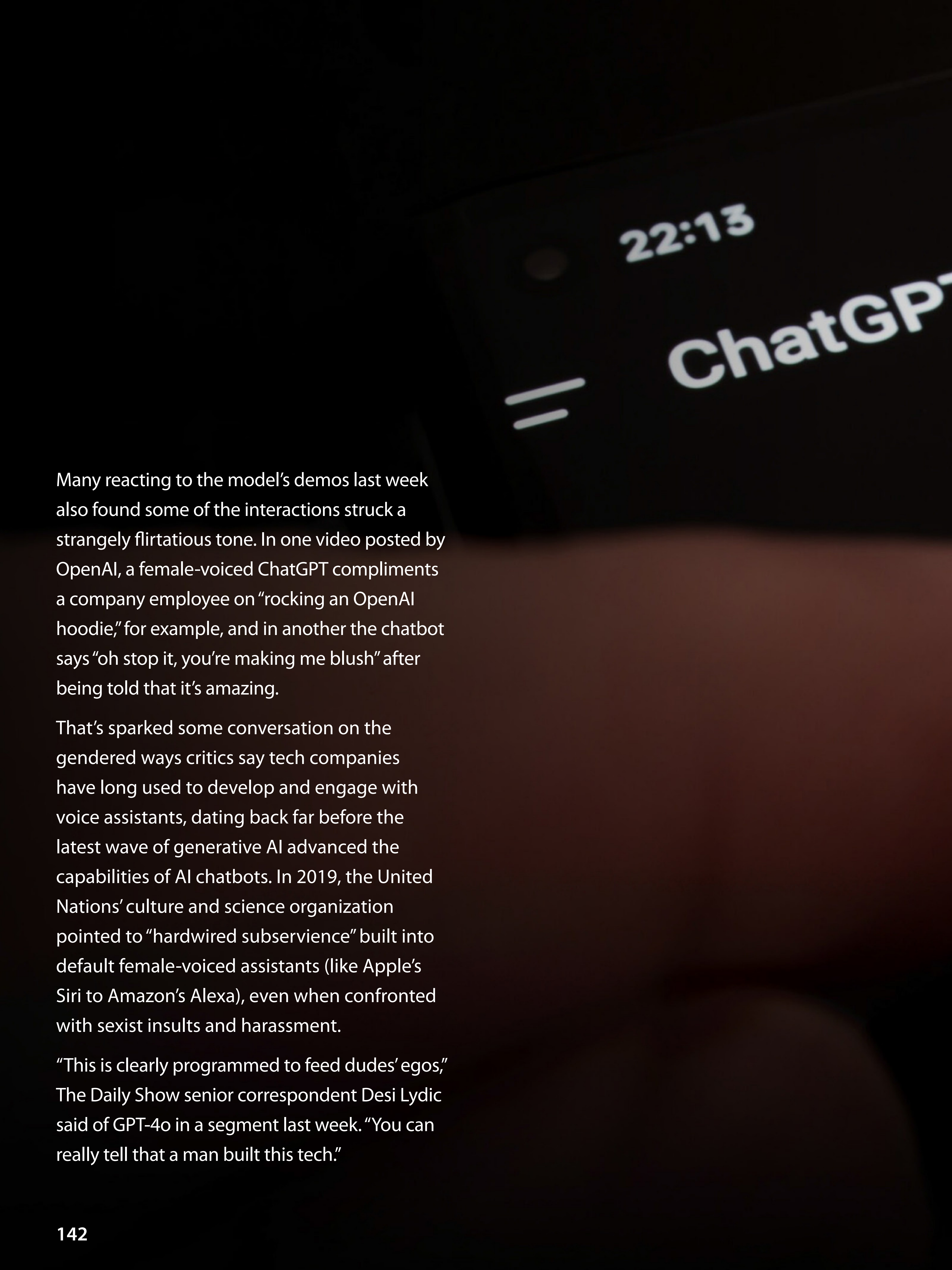


Image: Dustin Chambers



Many reacting to the model's demos last week also found some of the interactions struck a strangely flirtatious tone. In one video posted by OpenAI, a female-voiced ChatGPT compliments a company employee on "rocking an OpenAI hoodie," for example, and in another the chatbot says "oh stop it, you're making me blush" after being told that it's amazing.

That's sparked some conversation on the gendered ways critics say tech companies have long used to develop and engage with voice assistants, dating back far before the latest wave of generative AI advanced the capabilities of AI chatbots. In 2019, the United Nations' culture and science organization pointed to "hardwired subservience" built into default female-voiced assistants (like Apple's Siri to Amazon's Alexa), even when confronted with sexist insults and harassment.

"This is clearly programmed to feed dudes' egos," The Daily Show senior correspondent Desi Lydic said of GPT-4o in a segment last week. "You can really tell that a man built this tech."

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GPT-4o
GPT-4
GPT-3.5
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NEW CARS IN CALIFORNIA COULD ALERT DRIVERS FOR BREAKING THE SPEED LIMIT

California could eventually join the European Union in requiring all new cars to alert drivers when they break the speed limit, a proposal aimed at reducing traffic deaths that would likely impact motorists across the country should it become law.

The federal government sets safety standards for vehicles nationwide, which is why most cars now beep at drivers if their seat belt isn't fastened. A bill in the California Legislature — which passed its first vote in the state Senate — would go

SPEED LIMIT 45
TRUCKS BUSES RVS TRAILERS MUST USE CURB LANE
SPEED LIMIT 45
San Francisco CITY AND COUNTY
SPEED CHECKED BY RADAR
SLOWER TRAFFIC KEEP RIGHT
EMERGENCY PHONE AND CRISIS COUNSELING

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further by requiring all new cars sold in the state by 2032 to beep at drivers when they exceed the speed limit by at least 10 mph (16 kph).

“Research has shown that this does have an impact in getting people to slow down, particularly since some people don’t realize how fast that their car is going,” said state Sen. Scott Wiener, a Democrat from San Francisco and the bill’s author.

The bill narrowly passed on Tuesday, an indication of the tough road it could face. Republican state Sen. Brian Dahle said he voted against it in part because he said sometimes people need to drive faster than the speed limit in an emergency.

“It’s just a nanny state that we’re causing here,” he said.

While the goal is to reduce traffic deaths, the legislation would likely impact all new car sales in the U.S. That’s because California’s auto market is so large that car makers would likely just make all of their vehicles comply with the state’s law.

California often throws its weight around to influence national — and international — policy. California has set its own emission standards for cars for decades, rules that more than a dozen other states have also adopted. And when California announced it would eventually ban the sale of new gas-powered cars, major automakers soon followed with their own announcement to phase out fossil-fuel vehicles.

The technology, known as intelligent speed assistance, uses GPS technology to compare a vehicle’s speed with a dataset of posted speed limits. Once the car is at least 10 mph (16 kph) over the speed limit, the system would emit "a brief, one-time visual and audio signal to alert the driver."

It would not require California to maintain a list of posted speed limits. That would be left to manufacturers. It's likely these maps would not include local roads or recent changes in speed limits, resulting in conflicts.

The bill states that if the system receives conflicting information about the speed limit, it must use the higher limit.

The technology is not new and has been used in Europe for years. Starting later this year, the European Union will require all new cars sold there to have the technology — although drivers would be able to turn it off.

The National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 10% of all car crashes reported to police in 2021 were speeding related — including an 8% increase in speeding-related fatalities. This was especially a problem in California, where 35% of traffic fatalities were speeding-related — the second highest in the country, according to a legislative analysis of the proposal.

Last year, the National Transportation Safety Board recommended federal regulators require all new cars to alert drivers when speeding. Their recommendation came after a crash in January 2022 when a man with a history of speeding violations was traveling more than 100 miles per hour when he ran a red light and hit a minivan, killing himself and eight other people.

The NTSB has no authority and can only make recommendations.

‘IF,’ IMPERFECT BUT CHARMING, MAY HAVE US ALL CHECKING UNDER BEDS FOR OUR OLD FRIENDS

tasty

How do you make a kid's movie that appeals not only to the kids, but the adults sitting next to them? Most movies try to achieve this by throwing in a layer of wink-wink pop culture references that'll earn a few knowing laughs from parents but fly nicely over the heads of the young ones.

So let's credit John Krasinski for not taking the easy way out. Writing and directing (and acting in, and producing) his new kid's movie, "IF," Krasinski is doing his darndest to craft a story that works organically no matter the age, with universal themes — imagination, fear, memory — that just hit different depending on who you are.

Or maybe sometimes, they hit the same — because Krasinski, who wanted to make a movie his kids could watch (unlike his "Quiet Place" thrillers), is also telling us that sometimes, we adults are more connected to our childhood minds than we think. A brief late scene that actually doesn't include children at all is one of the most moving moments of the film – but I guess I would say that, being an adult and all.

There's only one conundrum: "IF," a story about imaginary friends (get it?) that blends live action with digital creatures and some wonderful visual effects (and cinematography by Janusz Kaminski), has almost too many riches at its disposal. And we're not even talking about the Who's Who of Hollywood figures voicing whimsical creatures: Steve Carell, Matt Damon, Bradley Cooper, Jon Stewart, Phoebe Waller-Bridge, Maya Rudolph, Emily Blunt, Sam Rockwell, and the late Louis Gosset Jr. are just a few who join live stars Ryan Reynolds and Cailey Fleming. Imagining a table read makes the head spin.

IF | Final Trailer (2024 Movie) - Ryan Reynolds, John Krasinski, Steve Carell

CONE

The issue is simply that with all the artistic resources and refreshing ideas here, there's a fuzziness to the storytelling itself. Just who is actually doing what and why they're doing it — what are the actual mechanics of this half-human, half-digital world? — occasionally gets lost in the razzle-dazzle.

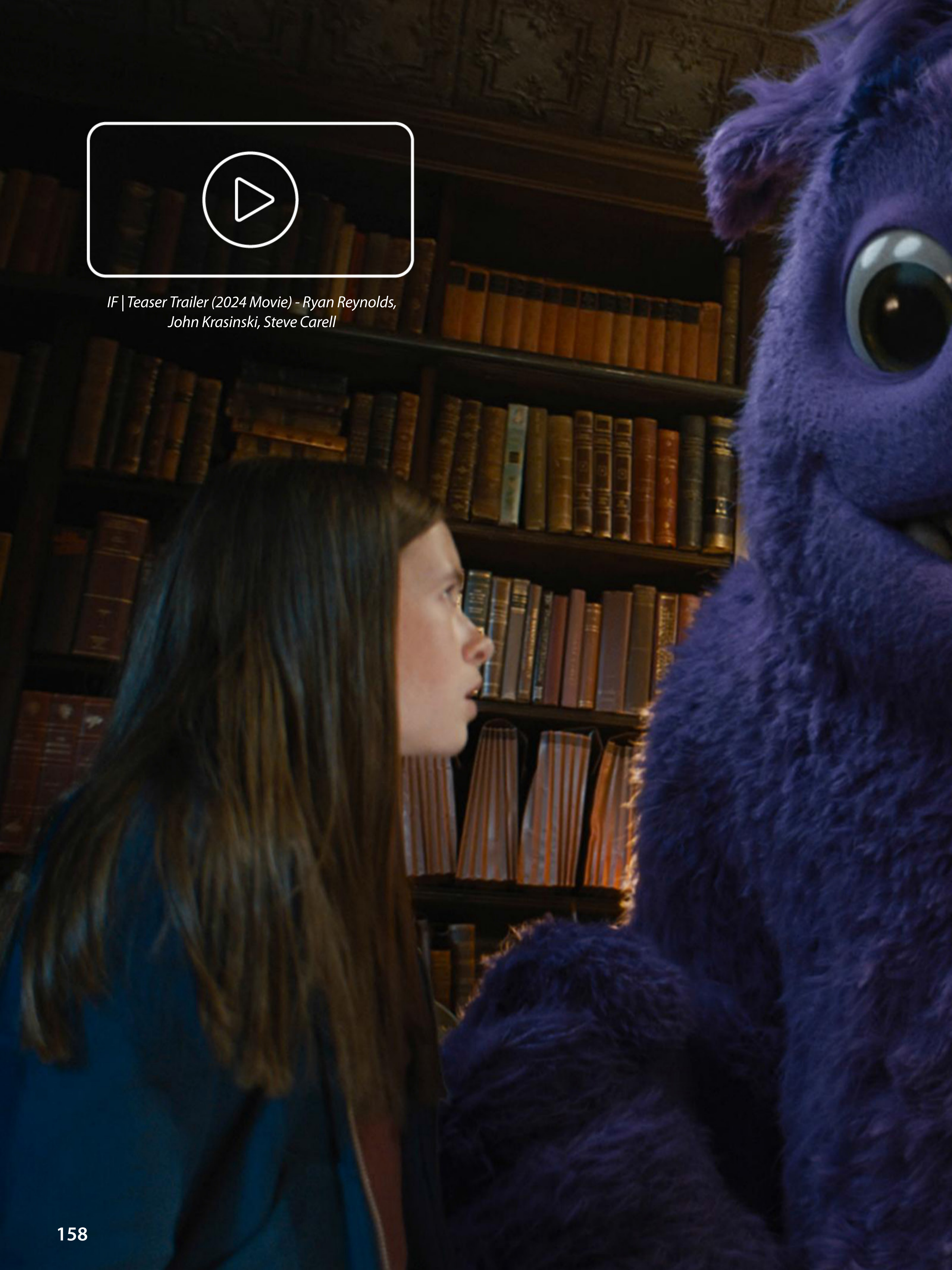
But, still, everything looks so darned lovely, starting with the pretty, brownstone-lined streets of Brooklyn Heights in New York City, where our story is chiefly set. We begin in flashback, with happy scenes of main character Bea as a little girl, playing with her funloving parents (Krasinski and Catharine Daddario). But soon we're sensing Mom may be sick — she's wearing telltale headscarves and hats — and it becomes clear what's happening.

Bea is 12 when she arrives with a suitcase at her grandmother's Brooklyn apartment, filled with her old paint sets and toys. Grandma (Fiona Shaw, in a deeply warm performance) offers the art supplies, but Bea tells her: "I don't really do that anymore."

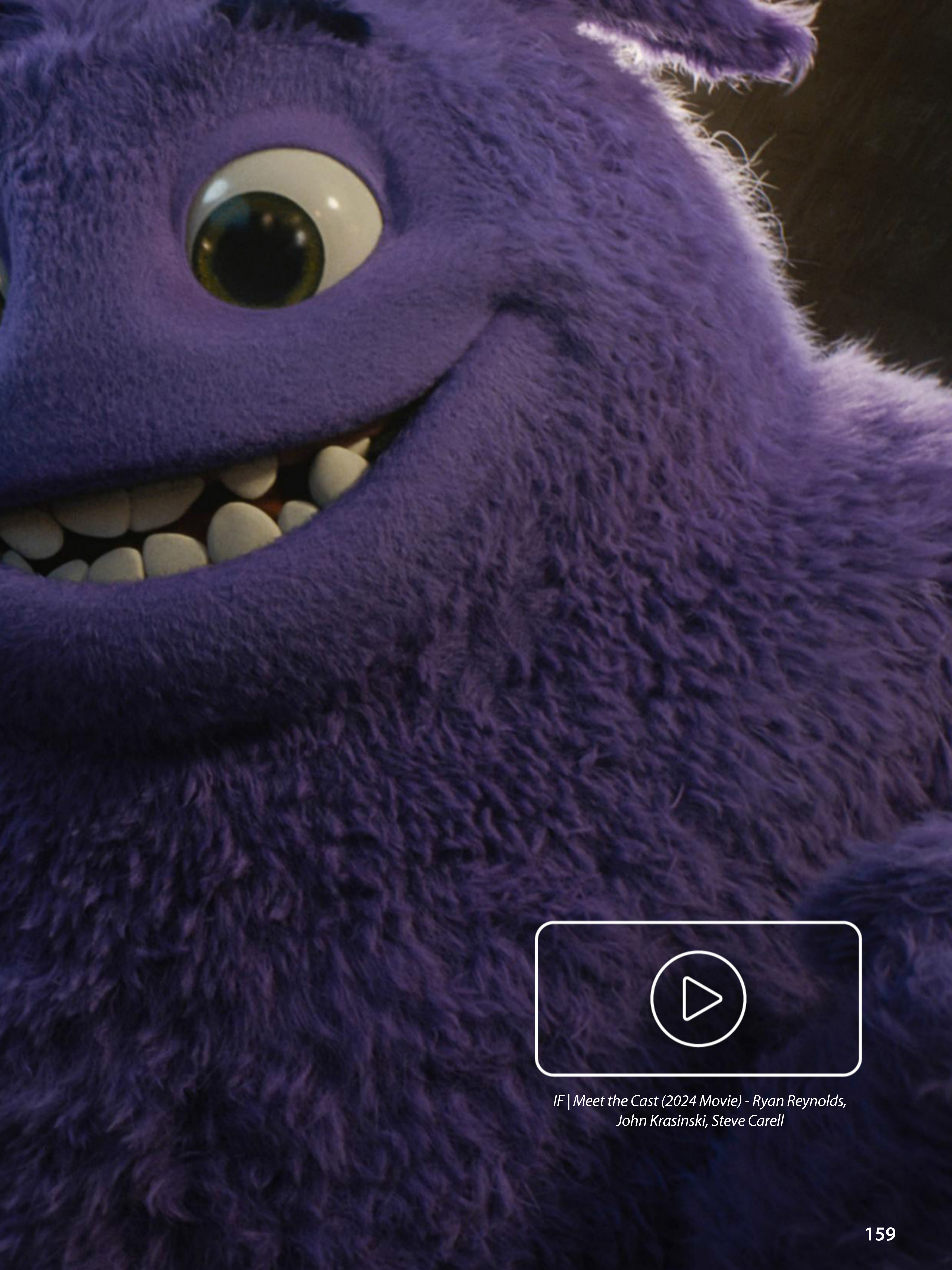
She says something similar to her father, visiting him in the hospital (it takes a few minutes to figure out that they've come to New York, from wherever they live, so Dad can have some sort of heart surgery.) He tells Bea he's not sick, just broken, and needs to be fixed. Hoping to keep her sense of fun alive, he jokes around, but she says sternly: "Life doesn't always have to be fun."

And then the creatures start appearing, visible only to Bea.

We first meet a huge roly-poly bundle of purple fur called "Blue" (Carell.) Yes, we said he was purple. The kid who named him was color-blind. These, we soon understand, are IFs —imaginary friends



IF | Teaser Trailer (2024 Movie) - Ryan Reynolds, John Krasinski, Steve Carell



IF | Meet the Cast (2024 Movie) - Ryan Reynolds, John Krasinski, Steve Carell

— who've been cut loose, no longer needed. There's also a graceful butterfly called Blossom who resembles Betty Boop (Waller-Bridge). A winsome unicorn (Blunt). A smooth-voiced elderly teddy bear (Gossett Jr., in a sweet turn.) We'll meet many more.

Supervising all of them is Cal (Ryan Reynolds.) An ornery type, at least to begin with, he's feeling rather overworked, trying to find new kids for these IFs. But now that Bea has found Cal living atop her grandmother's apartment building, she's the chosen helper.

The pair — Reynolds and the sweetly serious Fleming have a winning chemistry — head to Coney Island on the subway, where Cal shows Bea the IF "retirement home." This is, hands down, the most delightful part of the movie. Filmed at an actual former retirement residence, the scene has the look down pat: generic wall-to-wall carpeting, activity rooms for CG-creature group therapy sessions, the nail salon. And then the nonagenarian teddy bear gives Bea a key bit of advice: all she need do is use her imagination to transform the place. And she does, introducing everything from a spiffy new floor to a swimming pool with Esther Williams-style dancers to a rock concert with Tina Turner.

The movie moves on to Bea's matchmaking efforts. A tough nut to crack is Benjamin (Alan Kim), an adorable boy in the hospital who favors screens and seems to have trouble charging his own imagination (spoiler alert: that'll get fixed).

There are segments here that feel like they go on far too long, particularly when Bea,

Cal and Blue track down Blue's now-adult "kid" (Bobby Moynihan of "Saturday Night Live"), now nervously preparing for a professional presentation.

Still, the idea that adults could still make use of their old "IFs" at difficult times — and, to broaden the thought, summon their dormant sense of whimsy, as a closing scene captures nicely — is a worthwhile one. And by movie's end, one can imagine more than one adult in the multiplex running home, checking under the bed, hoping to find a trusted old friend.

"IF," a Paramount release, has been rated PG by the Motion Picture Association "for thematic elements and mild language." Running time: 104 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

BUS LANE
USES ONLY

FOR SOME DIGITAL DETOX, LOOK TO THE LATEST IN CRAFT KITS

Cra-Z-Art
Shimmer 'n Sparkle
Personalize! Spell Out Your Style!
INCLUDES OVER 800 Beads!
A·B·C Fashion BEAD BRACELETS
See rear panel for complete contents.

Fashion
BRACELETS
New!
6+
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I ♥ U

Digital diversions may have us tethered to tech, but screen fatigue is real. Even my digitally-native, young-millennial kids prefer printed books these days. And a recent weekend together at home had us busting out some craft kits.

There might have been Netflix in the background, but everybody's hands were busy with markers, paper clay and pompoms. We all agreed that being hands-on creative, instead of tapping with our fingers, was a simple and satisfying distraction we wanted more of.

Many people, apparently, can relate. Among the innovative gadgets and gizmos at recent toy and consumer products fairs were lots of booths offering kits that explore art, science and a lot in between.

Several newly launched craft kits caught the eye of James Zahn, senior editor of The Toy Insider. One is Purple Ladybug's groovy Prismic art, geared toward crafters age 12 and up.

"These 3D 'puzzles' are essentially works of art," said Zahn. Six styles are available; you fold and connect the pieces to form a sparkly lantern, USB-powered light string included.

"My 14-year-old daughter and I have enjoyed building these together," he said.

NEW SPINS ON CLASSIC TOYS

Zahn also mentioned a collab between two well-known toy brands: On its 50th anniversary, Playmobil has teamed up with Crayola to relaunch the Playmobil Color collection. You can use Crayola markers to color plastic clothing and vehicles for Playmobil's little figurines.

Zahn himself is drawn to the Hot Rod or Motorbike set.

This year also marks the 50th anniversary of Sanrio's Hello Kitty character.

Among the related new toys: The Woobles' Cuteness Overload Bundle has crochet projects to make Kitty, her friends Cinnamoroll and My Melody, plus extras like a milk bottle, rose and star. Crochet tutorials are geared for left and right handers.

TRADITIONAL CRAFTS, MADE MORE ACCESSIBLE

"Pottery as a classic craft picked up steam again during the pandemic," Zahn says. "Blue Marble's National Geographic Hobby Series Pottery Wheel is one recent intro that's showing some staying power."

The kit comes with everything kids and grown-ups need to throw a pot or figure, but it uses air-dry clay, so there's no need for a kiln or oven.

No wheel here, but Ooly's Creatibles Air Dry Clay Kit has 12 lumps of colorful clay plus three plastic sculpting tools; once you've made your creation, it just needs a few hours to sit and dry.

And is there a category Taylor Swift hasn't touched?

"Proving that classic play patterns always come back into vogue, the Swifties have put friendship bracelets back on the map," says Zahn. Cra-Z-Art's Shimmer Sparkle Fashion Bead Bracelets come with embroidery yarns, elastic cord, alphabet beads, pony shapes, and iridescent, frosted and metallic beads.

WATER BASED

KITS THAT ARE HANDMADE THEMSELVES

Lindsey Gaimei of The Dalles, Oregon, started a laser engraving business in her garage several years ago, which soon morphed into a shop making homemade craft kits. “When the pandemic hit, we wanted to create something for families to enjoy from the comfort of their home,” she said.

Her Woodsy Craft Co kits come with laser-cut wood figures, pompoms, string, markers and other bits to create decorative garlands. The Wilderness Kit has wildlife and pine trees to color and string; other kits feature themes like mushrooms, feathers and llamas.

SLIME

Marisa Jones Issa of Los Angeles likes the convenience of craft kits for her 10-year-old daughter.

“Samantha’s obsessed with slime,” Issa says. “She just received a National Geographic Mega Slime & Putty Lab Kit for her birthday, and it included DIY ingredients as well as small containers for the slime and putty. A kit’s much easier for parents! When she makes slime from scratch, I find glue or shaving cream or contact solution all over the place.”

The slime lab kit comes with magnetic, fluffy, color-changing and bouncy putties as well as a glow-in-the-dark slime lab.

Issa likes its source, too: “With the Nat Geo label, I know she’s also learning about science.”

FLUFFY
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LIQUID
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PUTTY

PURPLE LADYBUG
BUILD YOUR OWN
PRISMIC
DOG LANTERN
COMPLEXITY
3D PUZZLE LIGHT
⚠WARNING: CHOKING HAZARD – Small parts. Not for children under 3 years.
ASSEMBLE YOUR OWN 3D PUZZLE LANTERN
FINISHED SIZE 31 CM / 12.25" TALL

FOR ALL AGES

For budding stitchers, there are wee embroidery hoop kits with stencils of mushrooms, cats, deer, flowers, birds and a ladybug.

Skillmatics' Foil Fun gives kids a canvas background of sea, forest or outer space, and an array of colorful foil stickers to design a scene.

For adults, the self-expression and satisfaction of crafting can be something of a stress-reliever.

KiwiCo has some kits for older kids that adults might enjoy assembling. There's a bubble machine, a walking robot, a remote-controlled snake and light-up wire-art kits, among other offerings.

You can decorate your own playing cards with a kit from Kikkerland. The back pattern's whimsical doodle is by Spanish artist Hector Serrano; the front is blank, so you can personalize it with supplied markers.

Also at Kikkerland are kits to make an old-timey, wind-up music box, with cylinders that play tunes like "Twinkle Twinkle, Little Star" and "Frere Jacques." There's also a kit to make a harmonica.

UN SECURITY COUNCIL REJECTS RUSSIA-BACKED RESOLUTION ON BANNING WEAPONS IN SPACE

UNITED STATES
URUGUAY
SECRETARY-GENERAL
PRESIDENT
KINGDOM

The United States said this week that Russia last week launched a satellite that could be part of weaponizing space, a possible future global trend that members of the United Nations Security Council condemned even as they failed to pass a measure against it.

The Security Council resolution drafted by Russia rivaled one backed by the U.S. and Japan that failed last month. The rival drafts focused on different types of weapons, with the U.S. and Japan specifying weapons of mass destruction. The Russian draft discussed all types of weapons.

BOLIVIA
DIRECTOR
CHINA
EGYPT
ETHIOPIA
FRANCE

The U.S. and its allies said the language that the 15-member council debated was simply meant to distract the world from Russia's true intention: weaponizing space.

"The culmination of Russia's campaign of diplomatic gaslighting and dissembling is the text before us today," U.S. deputy ambassador Robert Wood told the council.

Russia's U.N. ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, denied that his nation was trying to mislead the world. Backed by China and others, he called the vote "a unique moment of truth for our Western colleagues."

"If they fail to support this, then they will clearly show that their main priority remains keeping freedom of the way for themselves to expedite the militarization of outer space," Nebenzia said.

Every nation says it wants weapons barred from space, and council members repeated. But when it came time to vote, the council evenly split 7-7 between backers of the U.S. and of Russia, with Switzerland abstaining. The measure failed under U.N. rules because it didn't receive nine votes.

"We have this negative, squabbling attitude among leading space powers that seem more interested in scoring points off their adversaries rather than engaging in constructive dialogue," said Paul Meyer, Canada's former ambassador for disarmament and a fellow at the Vancouver-based Outer Space Institute.

Since before humans left the Earth, the world's most powerful nations have worried about their enemies using outer space to attack them .

2017 г., г. Ташкент
ных дел СНГ

The Soviet Union and the United States sent men into space in 1961. Six years later, the Soviets, the U.S. and the United Kingdom signed a treaty declaring outer space a global commons that could be used for only peaceful purposes.

Even though nations could not wage war without the space-based communications, reconnaissance and weather tools that satellites and spacecraft provide, the 1967 Outer Space Treaty requires them to keep their weapons on Earth.

"You realize what an important conflict-prevention measure that was," Meyer said.

It's become even more important, he said, as a growing number of nations have moved into space. About a dozen have the capacity to launch spacecraft, and about 80 have their own satellites, not to mention the private companies with assets in orbit.

All of that could be at risk if a conflict in space causes an explosion and shrapnel, which could disable the vital systems that millions of people around the world depend on.

"A lot of people have a stake in being able to operate in space safely and securely," Meyer said.

The U.S. has gathered highly sensitive intelligence about Russian anti-satellite weapons that has been shared with the upper echelons of government, four people who had been briefed on the intelligence said in February. The people, who were not authorized to comment publicly, said the capability was not yet operational.

AI COMPANIES MAKE FRESH SAFETY PROMISE AT SEOUL SUMMIT, NATIONS AGREE TO ALIGN WORK ON RISKS

Leading artificial intelligence companies made a fresh pledge at a mini-summit this week to develop AI safely, while world leaders agreed to build a network of publicly backed safety institutes to advance research and testing of the technology.

Google, Meta and OpenAI were among the companies that made voluntary safety commitments at the AI Seoul Summit, including pulling the plug on their cutting-edge systems if they can't rein in the most extreme risks.

The two-day meeting is a follow-up to November's AI Safety Summit at Bletchley Park in the United Kingdom, and comes amid a flurry of efforts by governments and global bodies

서울신문
AI SEOUL SUMMIT
21 - 22 MAY 2024
AI 서울 정상회의
'서울신문 주요뉴스
'낮 최고 29도' 초여름 날씨…일교차 주의

Image: Ahn Young-joon

AI SAFETY
SUMMIT
AI SAFETY
SUMM
HOSTED BY THE
1-2 NOVEMBER 20
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REID HOFFMAN
ITALY
TINO CUÉLLAR
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DR ALONDRA NELSON
UNITED NATIONS
ADAM SELIPSKY
AMAZON WEB SERVICES
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DARIO AMODEI ANTHROPIC

to design guardrails for the technology amid fears about the potential risk it poses both to everyday life and to humanity.

Leaders from 10 countries and the European Union will "forge a common understanding of AI safety and align their work on AI research," the British government, which co-hosted the event, said in a statement. The network of safety institutes will include those already set up by the U.K., U.S., Japan and Singapore since the Bletchley meeting, it said.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told the opening session that seven months after the Bletchley meeting, "We are seeing life-changing technological advances and life-threatening new risks — from disinformation to mass surveillance to the prospect of lethal autonomous weapons."

The U.N. chief said in a video address that there needs to be universal guardrails and regular dialogue on AI. "We cannot sleepwalk into a dystopian future where the power of AI is controlled by a few people — or worse, by algorithms beyond human understanding," he said.

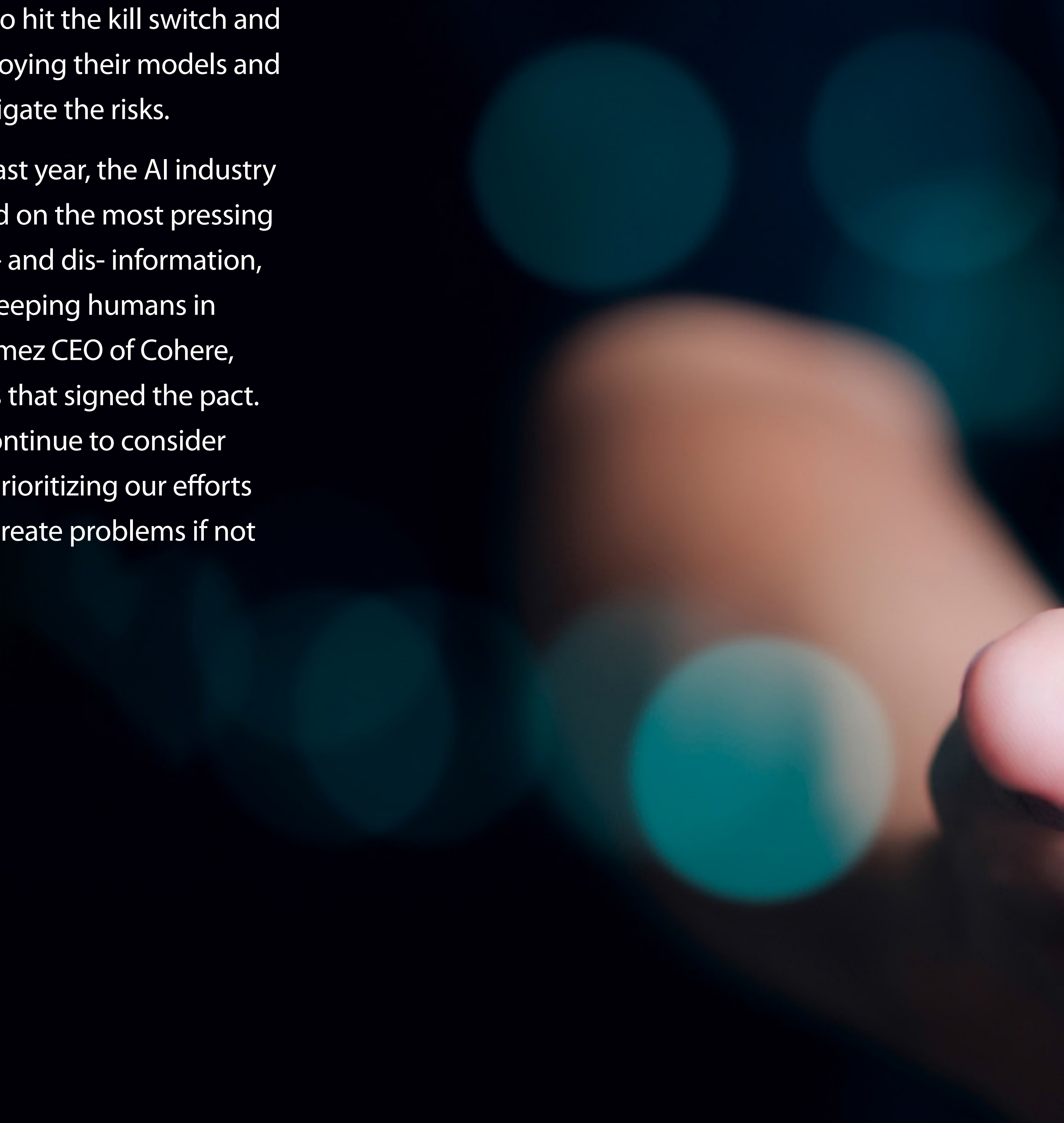
The 16 AI companies that signed up for the safety commitments also include Amazon, Microsoft, Samsung, IBM, xAI, France's Mistral AI, China's Zhipu.ai, and G42 of the United Arab Emirates. They vowed to ensure the safety of their most advanced AI models with promises of accountable governance and public transparency.

It's not the first time that AI companies have made lofty-sounding but non-binding safety commitments. Amazon, Google, Meta and Microsoft were among a group that signed up last year to voluntary safeguards brokered by the White House to ensure their products are safe before releasing them.

The Seoul meeting comes as some of those companies roll out the latest versions of their AI models.

The safety pledge includes publishing frameworks setting out how the companies will measure the risks of their models. In extreme cases where risks are severe and “intolerable,” AI companies will have to hit the kill switch and stop developing or deploying their models and systems if they can’t mitigate the risks.

Since the U.K. meeting last year, the AI industry has “increasingly focused on the most pressing concerns, including mis- and dis- information, data security, bias and keeping humans in the loop,” said Aiden Gomez CEO of Cohere, one of the AI companies that signed the pact. “It is essential that we continue to consider all possible risks, while prioritizing our efforts on those most likely to create problems if not properly addressed.”



DATA
Ai

Governments around the world have been scrambling to formulate regulations for AI even as the technology makes rapid advances and is poised to transform many aspects of daily life, from education and the workplace to copyrights and privacy. There are concerns that advances in AI could eliminate jobs, spread disinformation or be used to create new bioweapons.

This week's meeting is just one of a slew of efforts on AI governance.

The U.N. General Assembly has approved its first resolution on the safe use of AI systems, while the U.S. and China recently held their first high-level talks on AI and the European Union's world-first AI Act is set to take effect later this year.

TAIWAN IS SELLING MORE TO THE US THAN CHINA IN MAJOR SHIFT AWAY FROM BEIJING

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Whether it's tapioca balls or computer chips, Taiwan is stretching toward the United States and away from China — the world's No. 2 economy that threatens to take the democratically ruled island by force if necessary.

That has translated to the world's biggest maker of computer chips — which power everything from medical equipment to cellphones — announcing bigger investments in the U.S. last month after a boost from the Biden administration. Soon afterward, a Taiwanese semiconductor company said it was ending its two-decade-long run in mainland China amid a global race to gain the edge in the high-tech industry.

These changes at a time of an intensifying China-U.S. rivalry reflect Taiwan's efforts to reduce its reliance on Beijing and insulate itself from Chinese pressure while forging closer economic and trade ties with the United States, its strongest ally. The shift also is taking place as China's economic growth has been weak and global businesses are looking to diversify following supply chain disruptions during the pandemic.

In a stark illustration of the shift, the U.S. displaced mainland China as the top destination for Taiwan's exports in the first quarter of the year for the first time since the start of 2016, when comparable data became available. The island exported $24.6 billion worth of goods to the U.S. in the first three months, compared with $22.4 billion to mainland China, according to Taiwan's official data.

Meanwhile, the island's investments in mainland China have fallen to the lowest level in more than 20 years, dropping nearly 40% to $3 billion last year from a year earlier, according to Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs. Yet, Taiwan's investments in the U.S. surged ninefold to $9.6 billion in 2023.

Washington and Taipei signed a trade agreement last year, and they're now negotiating the next phase. U.S. lawmakers also have introduced a bill to end double taxes for Taiwanese businesses and workers in the U.S.

"Everything is motivated by ... a desire to build Taiwan's deterrent capability and their resilience, all in support of maintaining the status quo and deterring China from being tempted to take ... action against Taiwan," Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Kritenbrink said.

The world's biggest computer chip maker, TSMC, announced last month that it would expand its U.S. investments to $65 billion. That came after the Biden administration pledged up to $6.6 billion in incentives that would put the company's facilities in Arizona on track to produce about one-fifth of the world's most advanced chips by 2030.

Apart from its U.S. investments, TSMC is putting money into Japan, a staunch U.S. supporter in the region. Foxconn, a Taiwanese conglomerate known for being Apple's main contractor, is building manufacturing capacity in India, while Pegatron, another Taiwan business that makes parts of iPhones and computers, is investing in Vietnam.

King Yuan Electronics Corp., a Taiwanese company specializing in semiconductor testing and packaging, said last month that it would sell off its $670 million stake in a venture in

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the eastern Chinese city of Suzhou. KYEC cited geopolitics, the U.S. export ban on advanced chips to China and Beijing's policy of seeking self-sufficiency in the technology.

"The ecological environment of semiconductor manufacturing in China has changed, and the market competition has become increasingly severe," KYEC said in a statement.

Exports of semiconductors, electronic components and computer equipment from Taiwan to the U.S. more than tripled from 2018 to reach nearly $37 billion last year. It's not just tech: The island more than tripled exports of tapioca and its substitute, key ingredients in boba milk tea, to the U.S. between 2018 and 2023 and is shipping more fruits, tree nuts and farmed fish.

The recent trade data reflect "the strategy from both Taiwan and the U.S. to reorient that trade in an effort to de-risk from China," said Hung Tran, a nonresident senior fellow with the Atlantic Council's GeoEconomics Center.

The share of Taiwan's exports to mainland China and Hong Kong fell from about 44% in 2020 to less than one-third in the first quarter of 2024. That was "a very big movement," Tran said. "And I think that the share (of exports to mainland China and Hong Kong) will probably continue to decline."

Since the 1990s, Beijing has tried to balance its claim over the island with favorable economic and trade policies, aiming to foster closer ties that could make it harder for Taiwan to break away.

When the independent-leaning Democratic Progressive Party gained power in Taiwan in 2016, the new government put forward a policy to distance the island from the mainland and boost economic ties with other countries in the region, especially in Southeast Asia. Unhappy Beijing turned to its economic leverage to try to bring Taiwan to heel.

It has restricted travel by mainland tourists to the island and suspended imports of Taiwanese seafood, fruits and snacks. In 2021, China banned Taiwan-grown pineapples over biosecurity concerns, devastating Taiwanese farmers whose exported fruit nearly all went to the mainland.

Ralph Cossa, president emeritus of the Honolulu-based foreign policy research institute Pacific Forum, said Beijing's actions have helped push the island away.

Chinese President "Xi Jinping is tactically clever but strategically foolish in many of the decisions he has made; his loyalty tests on Taiwan businessmen and other heavy-handed business practices and decisions have been a major contributor to the success of Taiwan's" policy to distance itself from China, he said.

And that policy will continue with Lai Ching-te, the island's new president, Cossa said.

京元電子
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京元電子
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King Yuan
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The Testing Industry Benchmark
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CORN, MILLET AND ... ROOFTOP SOLAR? FARM FAMILY'S NEWEST CROP SHOWS CHINA'S SOLAR ASCENDANCY

Shi Mei and her husband earn a decent enough living by growing corn and millet on their small farm in eastern China's Shandong province. In 2021, they diversified by investing in solar energy — signing a contract to mount some 40 panels on their roof to feed energy to the grid.

Now, the couple get paid for every watt of electricity they generate, harvesting the equivalent of $10,000 per year that Shi can track through an app on her phone.

"When the sun comes out, you make money," Shi said.

The Shi family is on the leading edge of a solar boom in China, which has long dominated global solar manufacturing but didn't always install a lot of it at home. That's changing as the government focuses on the urgency of cutting its worst-in-the-world greenhouse gas emissions at the same time it grows its green economy. China wants one-fifth of its power to come from renewables by 2025, and it's offered a wide range of subsidies to local governments and businesses.

The push — in both industrial solar and in rooftop installations like Shi's — is working so well that the grid now has more power than it can handle. Shi was fortunate to get in early; some cities across Shandong province, including her village, are halting new rooftop solar installations.

Analysts and solar companies say the future remains bright if China can quickly adapt to the oversupply. Companies and utilities are scrambling to build battery capacity to store all the power being generated. They'd like to see more flexible energy pricing that could shape demand to better match supply. And they'd like technology that makes it easier to start and stop coal power so it's not always the clean energy of solar power that gets "curtailed" — in industry jargon — when the grid can't take any more supply.

"China has the great potential and opportunity to make its power sector achieve its carbon peak by 2025," said Grace Gao, a Climate and Energy senior campaigner at Greenpeace in China. "I am looking forward to seeing Shandong truly become a leader in renewable energy and showcase its best practices to the rest of China."

SOLAR POWERHOUSE

As with many infrastructure projects in China, it is installing solar at breakneck speed and scale. China added 216 gigawatts of solar in 2023, a little over half in large solar farms, according to the country's National Energy Administration. China's total is more than half of what the entire world added last year, according to research from the consultancy Wood Mackenzie.

A gigawatt of solar is enough to supply the energy needs of about 320,000 Chinese households for a year, Gao said.

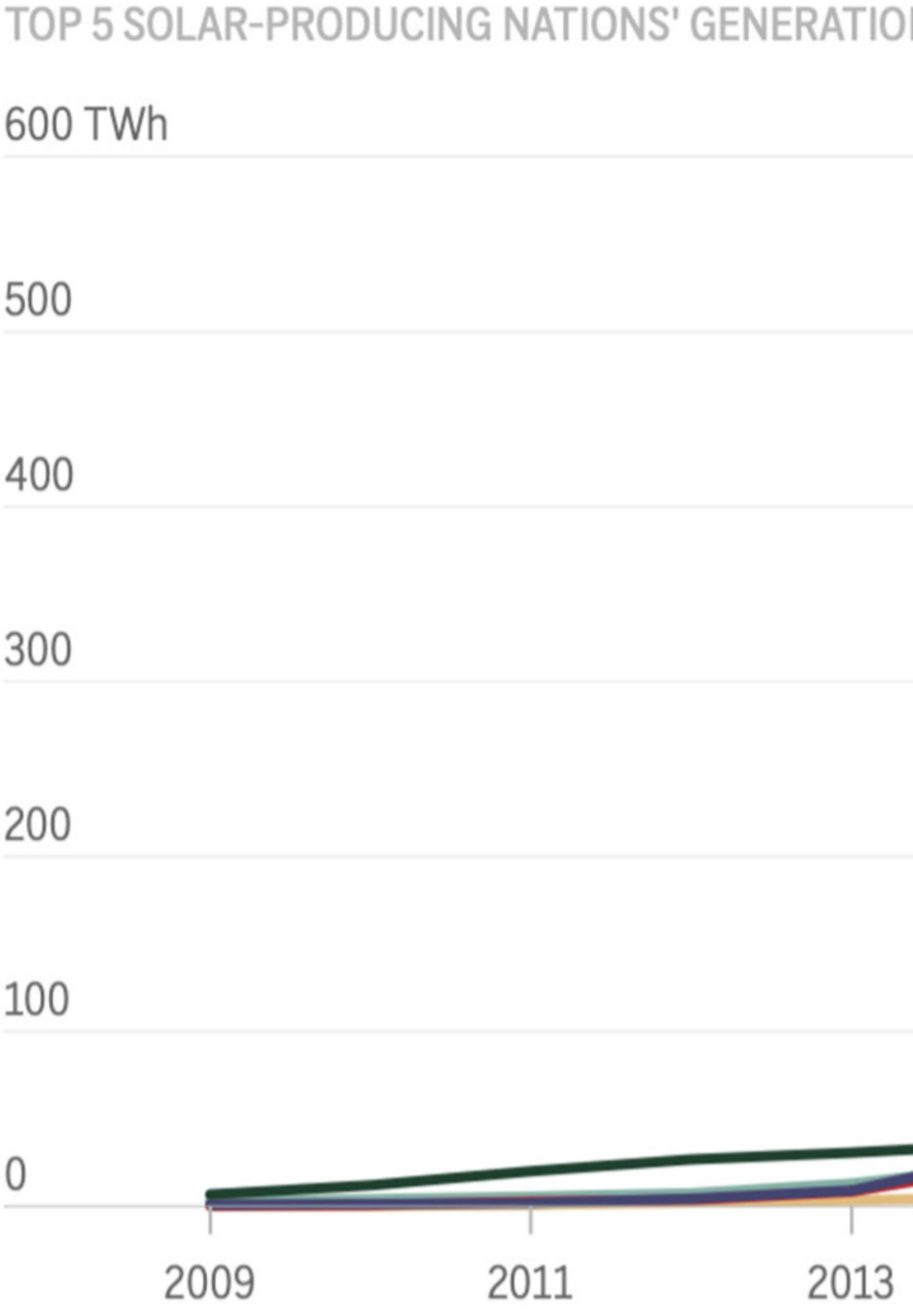
Shandong province added about 14 gigawatts of solar in 2023, and the province now has the ability to produce more power than it can use at certain times during the day. It's the leading province for renewable energy capacity, but that also means it's the first to encounter the difficulties of rapid growth.

"Other provinces will also meet these problems, because there will be more and more solar energy," said Peng Peng, the secretary general of China New Energy Investment and Financing Alliance, an industry group.

BOOM YEARS

After China announced subsidies for both rooftop and industrial solar in 2014, Shandong, with an advanced manufacturing industry, was a good candidate to take the early lead in solar development compared to less populous provinces like Qinghai or Inner Mongolia.

Wang Xingyong installs and maintains rooftop solar panels for clients ranging from



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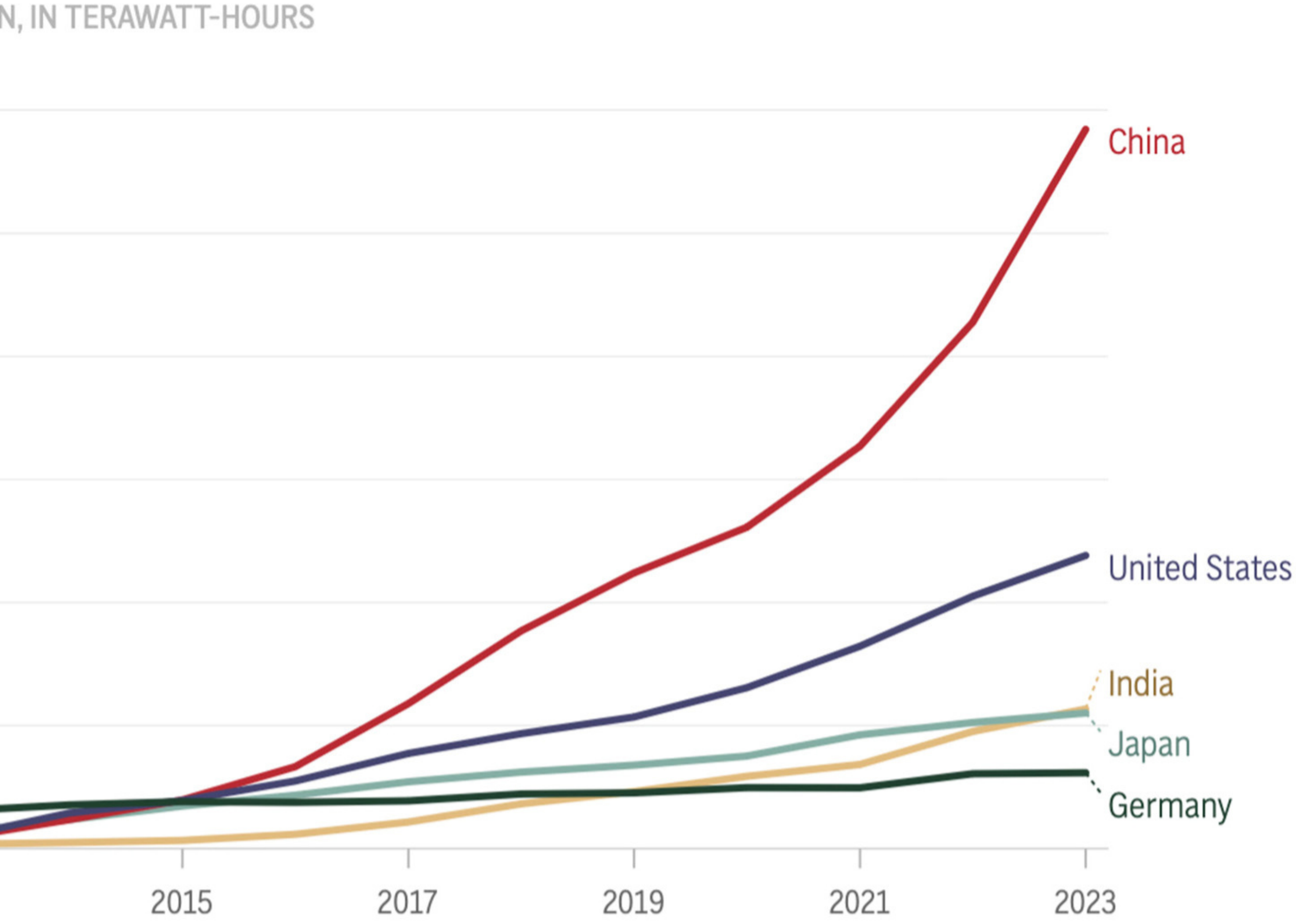
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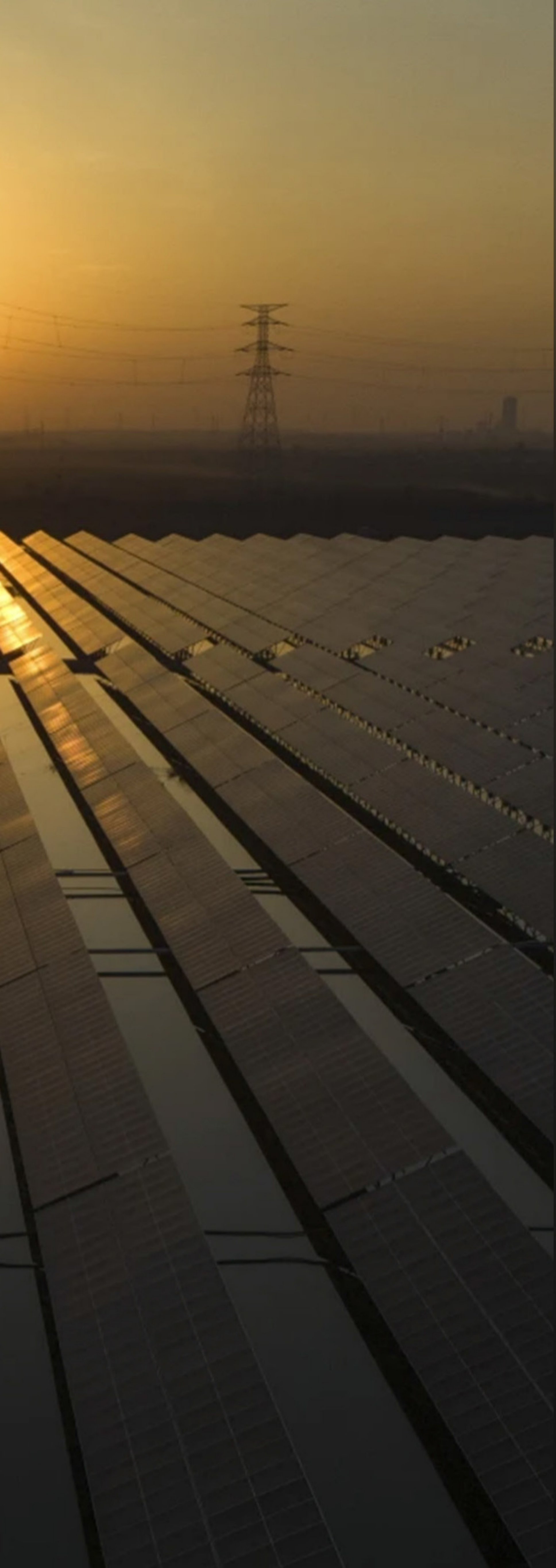

villagers to factories, and said his business has doubled every year since 2016.

"In the beginning, maybe we'd just do a project for one client, a farmer, and it'd be worth ten thousand yuan, fifty thousand," he said. "Later, we'd do a couple hundred thousand, millions, for just one project."

The business model varies, but many companies like Wang's solicit villagers and factories for the chance to use their roofs. Villagers buy the systems and get payouts from selling the electricity to the grid. Wang gets paid to build and maintain the solar setups for factories that use the electricity they generate.

Wang said the concept was a hard sell at first, with few people believing the government would pay them for generating electricity. Wang said he slowly won people over, starting with his family and friends, putting forward the money for the equipment himself, and then moving on to other villages with the results.

While pitching, few talk about big concepts like the country's target to ensure carbon emissions peak at 2030. It comes down to cash in people's pockets. Shi, the farmer, said her neighbors installed solar panels on their roofs after seeing her investment do well.

"Compared to just putting your money in a savings account, the rate of return is higher," she said. Thanks to her contract from 2021, she's still earning money even though the village has stopped allowing new installations.

A second model allows families to basically get paid rent to allow solar to be installed on their roof

— as much as 3,000 yuan ($414) a month, said Liu Wenping, an investor in solar companies. They might also get a free air conditioner or refrigerator as an extra incentive, and get a small percentage from the electricity sold, though not as much as people who buy the solar equipment.

SOLUTIONS IN PROGRESS

Chinese battery companies, EV manufacturers and utilities are all racing to develop more advanced batteries to store the electricity from solar panels. Batteries are getting cheaper, but still affect the overall model's profitability. The Shandong provincial government is running a pilot program in Dezhou with lithium iron phosphate batteries that can store power during peak production and feed it to the province's grid later as needed.

Other fixes include moving to what's called spot market pricing, with the price fluctuating in an open market. China currently uses prices set by regulators for its electricity, updated after intensive research. Without pricing flexibility, China can't incentivize customers to shift some use to non-peak times by lowering prices during those times.

But just last year, regulators in Shandong introduced trough pricing, with prices slashed sharply to encourage people to use electricity right when it was being generated abundantly but use was very low — in this case, the lunch period when factories typically all break at the same time. Factories responded by shifting some of their use to get some of the cheaper power.

Solar analysts say they expect China to eventually move towards completely market-driven pricing with the grid.

Meanwhile, China is intent on improving its grid. The National Development and Reform Council, which oversees economic policy and implementation, in February called on provinces to focus on increasing flexibility to the grid. It included a call to retrofit old coal plants with new technology so they can power up and down much more quickly. The council also wants a "smart" grid that can quickly decide the best time to distribute the power being generated.

"Every country in the world that is installing a lot of renewables and then facing the challenges that arise from all this variable intermittent generation, is searching for smart ways, intelligent AI-enabled or at least model-backed approaches to distributing this power and using it in the most efficient and effective way," said David Fishman, a senior manager at the Lantau Group consultancy who tracks China's energy industry. "Certainly that's where China is heading."

There's no sign of a pause in China's solar buildout. Companies are flocking to other provinces in the south that aren't as far along as Shandong.

And in Shandong, Wang, the solar installer, is optimistic about his prospects despite the halt in new projects, because he still has industrial clients. He's already planning to invest in upgrading transformers. And he's intrigued by a trend driven by China's electric car explosion, with the installation of all-in-one stations that combine solar generation, battery storage and electric vehicle charging.

"I trust the future will be better and better," he said.

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